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Mr. and Mrs.

Hannibal Hawkins

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By
**BELLE
C.
GREENE**

*Author of "Ad-
ventures of an
Old Maid," "A
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MR. AND MRS. HANNIBAL HAWKINS.

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BELLE C. GREENE

AUTHOR OF

"ADVENTURES OF AN OLD MAID," "A NEW ENGLAND CON-
SCIENCE," "A NEW ENGLAND IDYL," ETC.

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310-318 SIXTH AVENUE

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10000 pages 26, 1906

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CHAPTER I.

THE WEDDING DAY.

It's funny I hadn't never thought anything about it before, but when Major Hawkins, my intended husband, asked me to app'int our weddin' day, all to once it seemed to me as if there wa'n't many days in the week jest right for gettin' married in.

You see, Monday is washin' day, and Tuesday is ironin' day, and of course nobody would be married a Friday—and Saturday is bakin' and cleanin' up day—so there's only Wednesday and Thursday left, and me and mother wanted that much time for doin' odds and ends of work, and to kinder "turn round" in, as you might say. So I set the weddin' day for a Sunday mornin' before fust service.

Perhaps that was ruther soon, but there wa'n't no real good reason for puttin' it off, Hannibal bein' a widderer now goin' on four year (a very respectable length o' time, I call it, don't you?); and I, wall, I hadn't never been married, though I'd had plenty of chances, and, to tell the truth, I'd been *old enough* to be married some consider'ble time.

Hannibal hadn't no family except an only daughter, Car'line, about sixteen year old, and she wouldn't object, bein' she was almost as fond of me a'ready as if I'd been her mar. So things seemed to be pretty favorable. But right here I must stop and say that I had found out the man I was goin' to marry was what you'd call odd, terrible odd, and though we'd been keepin' comp'ny together for some time and I'd had every chance to git acquainted, yet I felt morilly sartin that it would be a good while longer 'fore I'd know him all through.

Not but what he was a likely man, more tew, for he alwers had the name of bein' a good husband to his fust wife, a good pervider, and all that, but, as I said, he was odd, and no mistake about it.

Wall, he come over the Saturday mornin' before the weddin', "so's to be on hand," he said, "and kinder dew for me and mother." We hadn't no men-folks in the house 'ceptin' Caleb Jones, the hired man, and he wa'n't much dependence at sech a time.

It was about eight o'clock in the forenoon when Mr. Hawkins 'rived, and an hour or two later I got a letter from his daughter Car'line. It was marked private and post haste, and read thus:

"DEAR MISS ROBBINS" (that's me, Ruth Ann Robbins, you know): "I write to caution you

about Par. I feel awful 'fraid that the clo'es he's took along to be married in, ain't right.

"Last night he was struck all to once with one of his *odd streaks*, and insisted on packin' his own bag—a thing he never done before in his life scurcely—and I don't know what he's gone and put into it. Please look him over real sharp 'fore he goes in where the folks be, won't you ?

"I'm sorry I can't come to the weddin' ; but you see it is this way. I cut off my bangs yesterday, and I got 'em so short that I look jest too homely for anything. I've cried myself most sick, I'm so disapp'inted not to go. Oh, how I wish I hadn't cut 'em at all ! I alwers get 'em too short !

"Par says I'm wicked silly to stay home on account o' my hair, but I can't help it—I really *can't* go and show myself sech a fright to all them folks—so there !

"I send you my best love, and hope everything will go off well.

"Your lovin' daughter that is to be,

"CAR'LINE HAWKINS.

"P. S. I'm almost sure Par has took *odd boots*. Please look out for him."

I laughed when I read her letter ; it didn't trouble me much of any. Thinks I to myself, "he's old enough to pack his own bag, and if he is a gump and a fool, the quicker we find it out the better." I felt the wust because Car'line

wa'n't comin' to the weddin'. I was awful fond of Car'line, and it worried me to think she would be so silly about them bangs.

Come Sunday mornin', when it was time to dress ourselves, Hannibal took one room and I another, and we begun. I'd jest got my hair all down when Hannibal hollered to me, and said he,

"Ruth Ann, I wish you'd bring in your needle and thread and dew a little job o' mendin' for me. I find my vest is all split out in the back; though goodness knows how in natur' it come so. I never wore it but once in my life; it's a bran' new one!"

I thought then of Car'line's letter, and when I see the vest I knew in a minute that he'd took the wrong one. But I sewed the old thing up as well as I could—a pretty lookin' vest it was to be married in—and went back to my room, feelin' a good deal disturbed and anxious.

His next predickement was wuss yet. This time he spoke to me so kinder quick and sharp, that I knew it was somethin' serious. I was jest puttin' my dress over my head, but I hurried in quick's I could to see what was the matter now.

When I opened the door, there stood Hannibal in the middle o' the room, lookin' down perplexed and inquirin' like at two old boots—you couldn't call 'em a pair, for I knew the minute I set eyes on 'em that they both belonged to one and the same identical foot! They both had a

round nob stickin' up conspicewous where the big toe went, and another great bulgin' one for the toe j'int. I hadn't never noticed anything peculiar 'bout Hannibal's feet, but them two boots did look curi's enough. And they looked kinder wicked and knowin', somehow, as if they was enjoyin' themselves!

I laughed, I couldn't help it, but Hannibal didn't even smile. He turned to me, and said he,

"Do them two boots look right to you?" Then he tried on one, and that was well enough; he put on the other, and—wall, you can imagine how it looked!

Of course the nobs and bulgin's come in the wrong places, and the hull foot was hind side afore and wrong side tew, as you might say!

He took 'em off and revarsed 'em, but still they continnered to disagree and look wicked at one another. He squared 'em up together as square's he could, and said he,

"Ruth Ann, I believe them boots is *odd*!"

"Ondoubtedly they be, Hannibal," says I, "and they *look odd*; but how do they *feel*? Can you wear 'em? That is the question."

"I don't care a continental how they *feel*," he answers, awful savage, "I'll wear 'em if they kill me; but I dew wish they didn't *look* so like the—the evil one!"

You can imagine my feelin's; but I knew and realized that we'd got to make the best of the sitiuation, so I says:

“ Oh, I guess they won’t be noticed. But you must be sure to set with your feet on the floor and well drawn back under your chair; and you mustn’t on no ’count whatsoever cross your legs—or if you do, be sure and have the good-lookin’ foot on top, you know.”

Then I had to leave him. I was all worked up, but I managed to finish my toilit, and when I was dressed I went into the spare chamber where the couples that were goin’ to stand up with us was waitin’. I found them all right, and finally Hannibal was ready, and him and me locked arms and perceeded to go down-stairs, follered by the others.

Cousin Tripheny and R’yal Hunt come fust, then Mandy Gorman and John Ray, then Cousin Seraphine and Siar Chase; there was six of ’em, and they made a noble ’pearance, tew.

Jest as we got on to the stairs, and Hannibal and me was most to the bottom, all of a suddin he claps his hand to his head, and whispers:

“ Ruth Ann! I must go back a minute! You wait right here!”

“ No, Hannibal,” says I, pullin’ him along, “ you can’t go back—how it would look!”

“ But I tell you I must and *will* go back!” says he, jerkin’ away and stridin’ up the stairs.

The percession stood stock still (what else could they dew?), and fust one then t’other whispered down to know what upon airth was the

matter, and the folks in the parlor begun to peek out and buz.

I concluded as long's I couldn't be married without Hannibal, I might as well go and look after him. Thinks I to myself, "who knows but what he means to put an end to his miser'ble, odd existence!" So, when he rushed up the stairs and pitched head fust into his own room, I wa'n't fur behind.

And what did I see that great silly dew, but make a dive for the lookin'-glass and go through with the motions of brushin' his hair, deliberate and arnest, as if—wall, as if he'd *had* some hair to brush! (For he's most as bald as a bed-post.)

Oh, I was mad! I snatched the brush away, and grabbed his arm.

"Hannibal Hawkins!" says I, firm and determined, I tell ye, "Hannibal Hawkins! you come down-stairs with me this instant! I've had enough of your oddity for one day. I've bore all I can or will—and when we're married," says I, "I'll take some of this ere nonsense out on ye, or else I'll—*I'll see!*" says I.

He glared at me dretful, kinder dazed and bewildered, but I managed to get him back down-stairs quick meter, and we all went into the parlor and took our places in front o' the minister.

But it did seem as if delays and hitches was to be the order of the day, for jest as we got all ready, the minister was called to the door on important business that kep' him ten minutes or so,

and there we all had to stand in the middle o' the floor, lookin' at one 'nother, and feelin' awkward enough.

Among the folks invited to the weddin' was old Aunt Debby Griffin and Mis' Ezry Potter, and they set close beside one 'nother. Aunt Debby



was deaf as a post, and Mis' Potter had lost her mind pretty much, but I knew it would please 'em both to come, so I invited 'em.

Wall, while we was waitin' for the minister, and the room was still as the grave, all of a suddin Mis' Potter turned to Aunt Debby and screamed into her ear loud enough to wake the dead :

“ Who did you say our Ruth Ann was goin' to marry ? ”

And Aunt Debby screamed back jest as loud, though Mis' Potter ain't deaf a mite :

" *Mr. Hannibal Hawkins !* "

Mis' Potter nods her head apparently contented, and sets and rocks for about a minute ; then she leans over and screams agin :

" *What did you say his name was ?* "

Aunt Debby tells her, and she nods and rocks as before ; but her poor old head can't hold more'n one idee to once, so she hollers a third time, and, says she :

" What did you say *her* name was ? " and Aunt Debby answers, patient and loud :

" *Ruth Ann Robbins !* "

Everybody was laughin' by this time, and I don't know how long them two poor old creatur's would 'a kep' our names goin' back'ards and for'ards if the minister hadn't come in jest then and put an end to it.

The ceremony perceeded along smooth and proper enough, till Hannibal undertook to find the ring to put on my finger. Then there was trouble.

He fumbled fust in one pocket, then another ; took out a cigar, a little box o' matches, a tooth-pick, a pen-knife, a horse ches'nut—that he alwers carries to keep away rheumatiz, you know—and several other things, took 'em out one to a time, looked at 'em thoughtful and inquirin', and put 'em back agin.

Finally he dove into some place and took out

a little wad o' paper, and all our sperits revived. That looked more like ; but when he ondid it, out rolled a dozen or more sugar-coated pills on to the floor !

He let the pills roll, and tried agin. This time he fished out a small card that 'peared to have some writin' on it. (I found out afterward that he'd writ down on that card where he had put the ring, for fear he'd forgit, jest as he had !)

When he'd read the card, what did he dew but stoop over deliberate and pull off one o' them dretful boots, and shake the ring out of the toe on't ! Then he put his boot back on, and straightened himself up as carm as if it was customary for bridegrooms to carry the ring in the toe of their boots, and takin' my hand, he slipped the ring onto my finger as graceful as you please ! The Prince o' Wales himself couldn't 'a done better.

Wall, I was thankful when it was all over, you better believe ! It hadn't seemed a mite as I expected. I supposed that the thought of the great responsibility I was assumin', and one thing 'n' 'nother, would lift my soul and make me feel dretful sollum and pious. But I declare to man ! I didn't think o' nothin' from beginnin' to end, but jest Hannibal's *odd boots and odd actions* ! So little does it take to keep a woman's mind from soarin' !

After the ceremony we had cake and coffee passed round, and then as the bells was ringin',

we perceeded to the church. It wa'n't but a few steps, jest acrost the common.

And we walked up the broad ile together, Hannibal and me, I a-leanin' on his arm, lookin' my best, and he lookin' hisn, with everybody's eyes upon us! I tried not to feel proud, but it was a happy moment for me, I tell you.

And when we set down in the old pew, where I had set ever sence I was a baby, mother on one side, Hannibal on t'other, and me in the middle, it seemed awful pleasant somehow. Seemed as if I never loved the old church so well. Not that there's anything nice or harnsome 'bout our meetin'-house in Craney Holler; it's almost a barn compared to city churches, but it has one reccommend. It is surrounded by natur', and the great winders was open so we could look out onto the common, all wavy with maples, then way off acrost the medders, and up, up to the pastur' lands and the woodsy hill tops that seemed to touch the blue canopy of heaven.

Oh, how can anybody that lives in the country feel to lack for religious privileges! God is so nigh everywheres in natur', and He speaks through her so plain and so direck! Why, if I could get the time, if I hadn't so much house-work and one thing 'n' 'nother to dew, I'd make a practice o' goin' out every day as reg'lar as I say my prayers, to some beautiful, sollum spot, a purpose to commune with my Maker through natur'. In no other way can we git so nigh to God.

✕ As I said, it seemed uncommon pleasant to me in meetin', that Sunday mornin'. The horses stompin' in the sheds didn't disturb me as usual, and the chirpin' of the birds and the dronin' of the crickets through the drowsy air sounded awful nice and soothin'.

Inside, the house was full of good, old-fashioned smells; patigony-mint and boy's-love and tanzy and cammomile. For all the old ladies, and a good many of the young folks, had a bunch of one or the other, and perhaps a sprig o' green caraway seed to munch away on, in case they's sleepy.

I looked down to where dear old Square Bab-bitt set in his pew, right in front o' the pulpit—asleep and noddin' so quick he was—and I noticed that one hand wisely supported his head in order to keep on his red wig o' hair. But he wa'n't alwers so careful, for I remembered how nigh he often come to losin' on't, and how, one Sunday, it did actewally slip clear off'n his bald pate, and how he jumped and clapped his hand to his head, and then all the young folks laughed, and some of the old ones. Even Parson Lamson jest barely saved himself by a timely sneeze!

Strange that all this should come back to me so, on my weddin' mornin', but it did, and a good deal more, and I had a hard tussle bringin' myself into a proper frame of mind to 'tend to the service.

✕ Mother always had a hymn-book to herself, on account o' seein' better, you know, so Hannibal and me we looked on together, and I had the

proud pleasure of hearin' him sing for the first time.

He's got a most powerful voice, Hannibal has, and his *expression* does beat all! Everybody was lookin' at him. Why! he acted it all out so, as you might say! When he struck a high note, he riz up to his full statur', ballunced himself kinder teen-terin' on his toes, stretched up his neck, rolled his



eyes 'way inter the back part of his head, and *sech* a tone as he did fetch!—high—oh, *terrible high*!

And on the contr'y, when he sung a low note, he jest scrooched all down inter his stummuck and chist, and somethin' rumbled way down in his insides, low, oh, *terrible low* and *sollum*! I should say his low "A" was the very lowest one I ever heerd in my life!

In short, his singin' was sartinly imposin', and

I knew it imposed on everybody in the meetin'-house.

As for me, I felt so excited and lifted up by it, that I kep' awake easy all through the sermon, didn't even nod once, and was right on hand to rouse up mother and Hannibal in season for the doxology. Hannibal sung agin (and I s'pose the rest did tew, but I didn't hear nobody but him); then come the benediction, and afterwards we walked out together as we came in, with everybody lookin' and admirin' and envyin'. And I tried to realize that I was married, and that this was my weddin' day, but somehow I couldn't, it all seemed like a dream.

CHAPTER II.

THE BRIDAL TOUR.

Hannibal said how he couldn't take no extenewated toor into furrin parts or so, because the busy time was comin' on pretty soon, and he must be to home tendin' to his mill business.

"Fact is," says he, "I hadn't orter take scource any toor at all jest now, I don't see how I can be away."

"We might go like one couple I heard on," says I, "that is, go separate; you go fust and leave me to look after the business, and when you got back, I could go and have my weddin' toor."

Hannibal seemed to think ruther favorable of this plan, but finally he says:

"No, we'll go together, or not at all; but we won't go fur. What say to New York City, Ruth Ann?"

I told him I was agreeable, but I'd heard it was a monster place to spend money in.

He said, "No matter if it was, we didn't go on a bridle toor every day, and besides, he meant to take along some punkin sifters and sell enough to part pay expenses."

(I'd orter told you before that Mr. Hawkins is in the Punkin-Sifter business, bein' sole inventor, perprietor, and mannyfacterer of the celebrated Hawkins Punkin-Sifter—you've all seen it.)

I thought the idee of takin' the punkin-sifters along was a bright and equinomical one, and I felt jest as he did about makin' the most of our bridle toor, seein' we might never have another one.

We concluded we'd go out by boat, then, if we wanted to, we could come back in the cars. We hadn't ary one on us ever been on the salt water, and mother was dretful worried for fear we should be sea-sick. She put us up half a dozen lemons and some codfish—she'd heard tell how they was good for sea-sickness—and she charged us over'n over to have life-perservers handy night and day in case of shipwreck.

Wall, we took the boat at New London, and a queer boat it was! It looked enough like a boat outside, fur's I know, bein' shaped some like Noah's Ark in the picters, but inside, my land! it was more like a king's palace than anything else, I should say! All white and gold, with beautiful carpits and velvit chairs, and curtins, and everything! Then, there was black waiters, more'n you could shake a stick at, standin' 'round wherever you went.

I should judge there were a hundred or more rooms, big and little, for the passengers to sleep in; state-rooms, they called 'em, and they was fitted up nice and comfortable as you please. I

observed that the furnitoor was all nailed down tight, and Hannibal said it was so that it would stay pat when the boat rocked and pitched in stormy weather.

It was candle-light when we went on board, and pretty soon, feelin' kinder hungry, we went down into the dinin'-room and had a nice supper. It seemed cur'is enough to be settin' there, eatin', and enjoyin' ourselves jest as if we was to home, and yet to know that we was really out on the broad ocean.

After supper we went up on deck. The moon was shinin', though every once in a while it would go behind a cloud; it was beautiful, and Hannibal and me took it all in and was dretful kinder contented and happy.

We locked arms, and meandered round leisure-like awhile, and finally set down and convarsed together in low, underground tones. (N.B. I've noticed that well brought-up folks don't never speak real loud in comp'ny, unless somebody's hard o' hearin'.) Wall, we set there talkin', and I s'pose I got to feelin' uncommon sentimentle; 't any rate I spoke out to Hannibal as I never felt to speak before, and says I:

"Hannibal, I wonder if you feel to-night as I dew?"

"I dunno'," says Hannibal. "How do you feel? not sea-sick, I hope?"

"No, no," says I, "I feel as if my bein' was complete at last, rounded out, full, as it were."

"Yes, oh, yes," answers Hannibal, rubbin' his head in a bewildered sort of way.

"You are my twin soul, and I am your'n." (You see, I had read such talk in a book—I'm a master hand to read.)

"What say?" says Hannibal, rousin' up a little. "Twins? Why, twins is ginerally brother 'n sister, or brothers, or sisters, or—or somethin'. Ain't you a leetle grain off, Ruth Ann?"

"Oh, Hannibal!" says I, kinder out o' patience, "I was speakin' in a figgerative and spiritewal sense! I mean that I am *your other half*, and you are mine."

"Sartin', sartin'," laughed Hannibal, "now I know what you're drivin' at. Of course I'm your other half, your 'better half,' as they say."

I hove a sigh and give it up. I begun to suspicion it was jest possible that sentiment might be throwed away on Hannibal, but I determined to make the best of him, and not the wust, as some wives seem possessed to do. "If he's only a good pervider, and don't git drunk nor chew terbacker, I guess I can put up with him," says I to myself.

We didn't talk much more, but we continued to set for quite a while, till bimeby Hannibal turns to me all of a sudden and says:

"Ruth Ann, I don't feel very well, somehow; I guess we'd better go inside."

I was on my "*kee veev*" in a minute.

"Oh, dear, Hannibal!" says I, "I do hope you ain't goin' to be sea-sick!"

"Oh, no, I guess not," he answers; but I see he felt shaky.

"Dear me suz!" thinks I, "I dew believe he's in for 't," but I didn't say so to him.

When we got into our state-room he took the lower shelf for hisn.

"I shan't have so fur to fall," says he, "if I happen to roll out." It struck me that he was uncommon considerate—for himself—but as it proved, it was jest as well for me; I didn't get a chance to occupy no shelf, nor to git a wink o' sleep that night.

Hannibal *was* sea-sick, and he grew wuss 'n wuss, till he was about the sickest creatur' I ever see. He e't up all the lemons and codfish that mother had pervided, but they didn't do him the leastest mite o' good; nothin' seemed to help him. And oh, what a fuss he made!

"Kill me, kill me, Ruth Ann!" he would groan, "if you have one ioty of love for me, kill me quick, and put me out of torment!"

I knew he was in terrible misery, but I did think he might a bore it 'a little more as become a man and a husband—not to say a soldier. Why! a sick baby would 'a behaved better'n what he did!

I began to lose my opinion of his moril courage—fact, I began to doubt if he ever had any.

"A pretty bridle toor this is!" thinks I to my-

self, and I made up my mind that Major Hannibal Hawkins had got to be *trained* in some few respects, *and by me*. But for the present all I could seem to do was to bear with him, and tend him the best I knew how.

In the middle of the night the wind riz high and strong, till at last it blew a perfeck gale, and the boat rocked and pitched fearful. If the furnitoor hadn't 'a been nailed down good and strong, we should all been hit and killed permisc'ous, fur's I know.

Bimeby, as the storm increased, Hannibal carmed down some, and seemed to colleck together what few senses he had left. He made me get out the life-perservers, and we put 'em on, and then set there in 'em waitin' our "dooms," as Hannibal said.

I didn't borry much trouble. I remembered how them wimmen, that Mister Stockton tells about, managed to git a good meal o' vittles, and set the table for three, out in the middle of the ocean, and I reckoned I had as much gumption as they had, any day, and so I told Hannibal, and charged him to hang on to the lunch basket, whatever happened.

Toward mornin' the wind changed, and the cap'tin said there wa'n't no more actewal danger, bein' as the wind was blowin' us right where we wanted to go, and we was most there. But some was so scairt and worked up that they wouldn't believe but what we was goin' straight to destruction

anyway, and Hannibal was one of them. His sickness had pretty much left him now, but he felt dretful weak and narvous, and insisted on dewin' all sorts of foolish things. He run of a notion that the boat would go to pieces eventewally, and we should have to float or swim ashore, if we got there at all, and he said he considered it his dooty to take percautions, and 'cordin'ly he perceeded to take 'em.

He made me throw away the lunch baskit (though I filled my pockits with do'nuts and cheese fust), then he ondid the satchel and insisted that we should put on most of the clo'es, and we did, fastenin' 'em to our bodies any way we could, till we looked like anermated rag-bags, and nothin' else. Then he took the empty satchel in one hand and the punkin-sifters in the other, and we started for the deck, there to await the final catastrophy. I ruther hoped we should be drownded or carried out to sea, we sartinly didn't look fit to be seen 'mongst folks on dry land!

Meanwhiles we'd been so took up with our "percautions" that we hadn't minded where 'bouts we was, nor nothin', and jest as we stepped out on deck, the boat give a tremenjus kind of a lunge, and bein' as Hannibal and me hadn't no base nor ballunce to us, rolled up and stuffed out as we was, we found ourselves knocked over, sudden and simultanyous, as you might say. Hannibal thought the boat was goin' to pieces, and the time for action had arrove!

He ketched up the punkin-sifters quick as a wink, and flung 'em fur's he could out to sea, threw the empty carpit-bag after 'em, and grabbed hold o' me as if he meant I should follow soot, but I braced myself up ag'inst the cabin door, firm as a rock, and says I,

"Hannibal Hawkins! that'll dew! Throw your punkin-sifters and all your airthly persessions into the sea, like a gump an' a fool, if you want'er, but spare your bride of a day! Would you go twice widdered into the City of New York, and a murderer to boot?" says I.

This seemed to bring him to his senses some. He stared round and looked bewildered, rubbin' his head as usual.

"Why! What was it?" he said. "I thought we was goin' to pieces! Where be we, anyway?"

"We're in New York City; we've arrove safe and sound," I answered carmly, as I pulled him away to foller the rest o' the passengers out.

When we came in plain sight of the folks, wearin' our life persarvers, and all decked out in our clo'es as we was, everybody stared, and some laughed and hooted. I didn't blame 'em a mite, nuther, and I told Hannibal so, and insisted on goin' right back in and onriggin' ourselves.

"Redickerlous!" says I, "who ever heard of anybody's wearin' all the clo'es in a weddin' trewso to once!"

When we was reduced to our original bigness, there lay a great heap o' clo'es; and how to carry 'em? that was the question.

"Hannibal!" says I, lookin' at him severe, "Hannibal, where is the bag?" (I knew too well where it was!) and he wrings his hands and groans:

"Oh, what a fool, what a blarsted fool I've been! And the punkin-sifters is gone tew!"



"Yes, they be," says I; "but I begrudge the bag the wust. What's to do about a bag?" says I, excited like.

I don't know what we should 'a done, if it hadn't been for a good-natered musicianer—a bass-horn man, he was—he stepped for'ard and offered to lend us the great green woollen bag that he carried his instrument in; said how he could spare it jest as well as not.

Wa'n't it real friendly? We accepted of his offer thankful enough, and when our things was all stuffed into the bag it made quite a good-lookin' bolster; but rather a curi's thing for a new-married couple to carry their bridle trewso in, that's a fact!

As we was walkin' away from the wharf, luggin' the great green bolster between us, all of a suddin Hannibal stopped and squared round in his odd way, and lookin' back over the water, p'inted with his finger.

There, as plain as day, we see the punkin-sifters sailin' in a percession out to sea! They did sail nobly, and they looked affectin', and no mistake! The tears came into Hannibal's eyes.

"Ruth Ann," he says, tremerlous, "I'd give a dollar-bill to know where'bouts they'll put in, and how they'll fare!"

"Yes," says I, "I hope somebody'll get 'em that will 'preciate 'em; then they won't seem quite sech a dead loss, will they?"

"They'll be a dead loss to us, Ruth Ann," he answers, shakin' his head dismal; "and they was to help pay our boards at the Fifth Avenew House!"

"Oh, la! now, Hannibal, don't you fret about that!" says I, "I'll resk but what we'll git along all right. We can hire a room cheap somewheres and board ourselves, if necessary. You hain't no idee what a manager I be! Why, I can cook a good meal o' vittles out o' next

to nothin', if the kindlin's is only dry!" says I, laughin'.

Upon this, he brightened up some, and when we took a horse-car and got fairly settled with the green bolster between us, we both began to feel as if things might 'a been a good deal wuss after all.

In p'int o' fact, our luck had turned, for we hadn't been in that car more'n five minutes, before she stopped to take on some passengers, and one of 'em (a master nice lookin' young feller), quick's his eyes lit on Hannibal, rushed for'ard and grabbed him by the hand, awful corjul.

"Major Hawkins! by Jove!" says he. He did 'pear dretful glad to see him, and when he was interduced to me he 'peared gladder yet. He explained that he was kind of a cousin to Hannibal and had visited him when his fust wife was alive.

"So you're married ag'in, and this is your new wife!" bowin' to me as if I'd been the queen, and smilin' till all his harnsome white teeth showed. "Married, and on your bridle toor, I'll be bound!" he says ag'in.

We told him that was about it.

"Wall, wall," says he, "now you shall come right along home with me, and see how we live in Bohemy! My wife and daughter will be delighted to have you!"

"Bohemy?" says Hannibal; "is it nigh about here? we hadn't thought o' goin' further'n New York City."

“ Oh, we shall be there in no time!” answers Mister Landsdown—that was the young man’s name.

When we found Bohemy wa’n’t fur away, we was glad enough to go, for we both thought of the board bills and the loss of the punkin-sifters, and this invite did seem like a reg’lar providence, didn’t it?

In a few minutes more we found ourselves standin’ on Cousin Landsdown’s door-stun, and we was in Bohemy.

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CHAPTER III.

AMONG THE BOHEMIANS.

Cousin Landsdown opened the front door with his latch-key, and begun stridin' up the stairs, two or three steps to a time, shoutin' at the top of his voice :

"Hullo', there, Kate! Hullo', Blossom! where are you! Hullo', hullo', everybody!" and Hannibal and me we follered along after, luggin' the green bolster bag between us.

In a minute a door flew open and two wimmin sprung out at him. The youngest one, his daughter I took her to be, grabbed him round the neck, huggin' him like all persess't, not mindin' anybody was with him. The other woman came for'ards more quiet like, smilin' and holdin' out both hands, real corjul, before she even knew who we was.

"Hold on, hold on, little one!" says Cousin Landsdown, extractin' himself away from the girl as quick as he could, "don't you see we've got company along? Kate," to his wife, "here's Major Hannibal Hawkins and his new wife from Punkinville, and they've come to the city on their

bridle toor! I met 'em in the car and brought 'em straight home to you—knew you'd be glad to see 'em!" laughin' and rubbin' his hands.

"Here, Bloss," he says to the girl, "come and kiss your new cousins."

And 'cordin'ly Bloss did come and kiss us, tacklin' Hannibal fust, and kissin' him as he never was kissed afore, I guess, flingin' her two arms round his neck, and half-chokin' him and frouzlin' his hair all up, so it took him some little time to rekiver and git smoothed down, I noticed.

I didn't exactly approve of sech a great growed-up girl makin' so free with a strange man, if he was her cousin. Our Car'line wouldn't 'a done so. Car'line would 'a blushed and hung back kinder bashful, waitin' to be kissed fust. They was about of an age, I should judge, bein' not fur from sixteen.

Wall, they showed us into the parlor and I began to take off my things, while they stood by waitin' on me, Blossom askin' all manner of questions. My land! that girl could ask more questions in five minutes than our Car'line could in a week! And when she see the green bolster bag she couldn't rest till she knew all about it; what was in it, where it come from, and everything.

I told her our bridle trewso was in it, and then as brief as possible I give her an account of the hull matter.

Oh! how she laughed and hollered and hild on to her sides, as if she'd die!

"Oh, mar! oh, par!" she screamed, "isn't it too awfully derlicious! Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

Cousin Landsdown and his wife laughed, though they didn't make sech a fuss as she did, and they told her to go up garret and fetch down the brown luther valise, and she done so, and they give it to us on the spot for a weddin' present.

We was pleased enough, not only because it was a useful and harnsome present, but now we could send the bass-horn man's bag back, which we did that very afternoon with our very best re-specks, an' an invite to visit us if he ever come Punkinville way.

The girl, Blossom, as they called her, seemed to take a wonderful shine to me from the fust. She was a dretful pretty, lovin' little thing, and she hung round me, huggin' and kissin' me half the time. I wa'n't used to it, and didn't hardly know what to make on't.

"Oh, see here, mar!" she would 'peal to her mar, every once in a while, "ain't she jest sweet, ain't she derlicious?" meanin' me, you know.

Finally I says to her, "Blossom," says I, "seems to me you have a curi's use o' words here in Bohemy. Up home we ginerally apply the word 'derlicious' to somethin' good to eat—a pie or a puddin'—never to folks."

"But you are good enough to eat," she answers, laughin'; "you do look jest too sweet for anything!"

There was mirrors hangin' all round the room everywheres, and when she said this, naterally I glanced up into one, kinder sly, to see how I did look anyway, and she ketched me at it. Then she grabbed me round the neck and most smothered me with kisses ag'in. I never see sech a kisser.

"There!" she says, "you can see for yourself what a darlin' you be! You look jest like a little strong-minded, old-fashioned dove, that's what you do!"

I laughed and kissed her back. There wa'n't no harm in her likin' my looks, and I wa'n't a goin' to pertend to be mad; but more to see what she would say than anything else, I says:

"My face may be well enough, but my clo'es—I ain't much fixed up 'side of you and your mar," and I looked down at my gray alapaccer disapprovin'.

"I don't care, you are lovely, clo'es and all," she answers, "and your husband, he is lovely too! A great lovely giant. And oh, sech a name! '*Feebus*'! as par says, what a name! *Hannibal Hawkins*!" She said it over 'n over and laughed as if she'd die.

"But the best on't is," she goes on, "you've come jest in the nick o' time to be the lions at our dinner-party to-night."

"Dinner-party!" says I, "oh, I guess we can't go to no party; we didn't come perpared."

"But you are *here*," she says, "so there ain't no 'go' about it; you are *here*, don't you see?"

"What do you call it a dinner-party for, if you have it in the night-time?" I asks; "I should think it would be more of a supper."

"Oh, we turn night into day, and day into night, here in Bohemy," she answers.

"Bohemy, Bohemy; what a funny name," says I. "I never heard of no sech place nigh New York before. Is it a subbub, or what?"

"The name Bohemy don't apply to the place where we live, but to the society we form," she explains.

"Oh! kind of a religious sect?" says I; "there's lots o' new ones now'days, I know."

She laughed and hunched up her shoulders.

"Oh, dear me, no!" she says; but jest then her mar come in to call us to breakfast.

"Breakfast!" thinks I, "at ten o'clock in the forenoon!" But I was glad enough to go, for I began to feel kinder faint and hungry.

We went out to breakfast, and I must say we found our new cousins about as kind and hospitable as any folks we ever see. But they was curi's. As I say, they was kind, but they didn't treat us as if we was one of 'em; more as if we was some sort of interestin' curiosities, Feejy Islanders, or circus mounstrosities, to be looked at and studied and enjoyed, you know. I don't think Hannibal

minded, but it riled me. I didn't fancy bein' treated like a menagery.

Come night, Hannibal and me put on our best cloe's and went down to the parlors.

When Blossom come in, I didn't hardly know what to think of her dress. I'd read about "*decollity*" dresses, and seen picters of 'em in the fashion-books, but Blossom's dress was terrible "*decollity*;" it did beat all! and I hoped when her mar see it, she'd make her go right up-stairs and put on somethin' different. But la! I found out her mar's was wuss yet, if possible!

As a woman, and specially as step-mother to Car'line, I felt that I orter pertest, and 'cordin'ly I did.

"Blossom," says I, "how can you go to a party in that shape! why! me and Car'line wouldn't think o' goin' round so, not even to home, on a hot day with all the blinds shet and the doors locked!"

She seemed surprised. She looked down at her pretty bare shoulders and her arms without the sign of a sleeve to kiver 'em, and I couldn't see as she blushed or even winked at the sight, and says she:

"Everybody dresses so here for evenin'; it is full dress, you know."

"I should call it anything but *full* dress," says I. "Why, you ain't half dressed, not half!"

She burst out laughin'. "Oh, you funny, funny



BLOSSOM.

little old-fashioned cousin!" she says; "you make me laugh!"

All the ladies to that party was dressed the same way. I didn't have a chance to free my mind to Hannibal about it till afterwards, but I hoped he knew me well enough to understand that I wouldn't approve o' no sech fashions, in Bohemy or out of Bohemy.

Pretty soon we went out to dinner and set down to the table. Cousin Landsdown put me on his right hand, which I took to be the proper place, but I'd ruther 'a set 'side o' Hannibal.

I was so 'shamed and embarissed at fust (on 'count o' the decollity-dresses, you know), that I didn't feel like lookin' round much; but bimeby I began to be so took up with what the folks was dewin' and sayin', that I forgot all about their cloe's. Funny, how quick we get used to things, ain't it?

But it did beat all, the strange stories them Bohemianers had to tell about one another! Why! up in Punkinville you go to a party and the wust thing you hear is how somebody (that ain't there, of course) is stingy, or extravergant, or desaitful, or homely, or tryin' to ketch a beau, if she's a woman. But here in Bohemy, I declare, they actewally took my breath away! Sech terrible things as everybody seemed to be a dewin' of!

'Cordin' to their tell, 'bout all the married folks fit with one 'nother, or got dirvored, or run away with somebody's else husband, and the young

folks 'peared to be cuttin' up jest as bad! And here they was, laughin' and jokin' about it, as if it was all a matter of course. But in mere jestice to 'em I must say that it wa'n't all gossip and scandal. No! Sech high-toned and intellectible subjects as they discussed on, I never see! Sicology, Agnostycism, Boodism, and a lot more that I can't remember the names on. Everybody 'peared to be edicated, oh! terrible edicated, and I says to Cousin Landsdown:

"For the land's sake, cousin, how do you Bohemianers happen to know so much? I should jedge that every one of you had swallered a Webster's Unabridged and a hull Encyclopedy to boot!"

"Oh," he answers laughin', "in Bohemy nobody is tolerated unless he knows somethin', or is agreeable. Ignorance and stoopidity is unpardonable sins, while even a talent for lyin' about our neighbors is appreciated, as you may have obsarved."

He turned to answer the woman that set on the other side of him. She was jest askin':

"What did you think of my article on '*Microscopy in Fiction*,' Mr. Landsdown?"

"Capital, capital!" he answers. "I fancy it must 'a made old Rowley squirm! Keen, keen as a razor, Mis' Van Allen!"

The woman laughed out loud, and he laughed. Then, happenin' to lean for'ard a little in her seat, she ketched me lookin' at her.

"Have you read it?" she asks, smilin'.

"No, I hain't," says I, "what is it about? What does *microscopy* mean?"

She looked at Cousin Landsdown, and said somethin' that sounded to me like "Arlerbongtown" ("Ah le bon temps!") and I naterally thought she was askin' if I come from that place, so I says:

"No, I reside in Punkinville."

Cousin Landsdown laughed.

"Mis' Van Allen," says he, "let me interduce my cousin, Mrs. Hannibal Hawkins, from—Punkinville," stoppin' jest so, before the name.

"Hope to see ye well, Mis' Van Allen," says I, and in reachin' acrost cousin's plate to shake hands with her, I knocked over two of his wine-glasses, and the contents went into his plate.

Miss Van Allen she give me the tip eends of her fingers.

"Charmed, I'm sure, Mis' Hawkins," says she, which may be the correck way to answer an interduction in Bohemy, but wouldn't be considered so up our way.

"You were askin' what '*microscopy*' meant," says she; "perhaps Mr. Landsdown will be kind enough to tell us;" and she looked at him with her great laughin' eyes, as if she was on the p'int of enjoyin' somethin' amazin' well.

"Certainly, certainly," says he, lookin' down into his plate full o' wine, kinder meditatin'.
 "'Microscopy' means literally, examination with

the microscope ; and microscopy in fiction is where an author takes his characters all to pieces, mentally, morilly, and physically, and examines 'em with the microscope (of his mind, you know), and does it scientific'ly. For instance, in writin' of a woman, he tells how she looks and feels, acts and thinks ; tells why she does this or that least-est thing, tracin' the motives and causes way back to the fall o' man, if necessary, and so goes on, in and out, back'ards and for'ards, till the reader's head swims."

"How queer !" says I. "But what in natur' do they dew it for ? It can't be interestin' to nobody, and it must be hard work. What do they dew it for ?" I asks.

"The Lord only knows ; I don't," he answers.

"Now, if I was goin' to write a story," says I, "I should make it lively, and go straight ahead. I don't believe in meanderin' or microscopin'. I guess I should tell how a woman loved a man and couldn't git him for some time, how she worked and contrived to make him like her, and how, when she did manage to git him and marry him, at last, they proved to be incompattyble to one 'n 'other, and was both miserable ; but how, after a good deal of bickerin' and wranglin', a good many sighs and tears on her part, and some consider'ble perfane language on his'n, they learn to git along together and live middlin' comfortable ever after. Sech a story would be interestin' and—and—nateral," says I.

Jest at this p'int we dropped the subject, for a young lady they called Saffo began to say some poitry that she made up herself as she went along, and we all kep' still to listen. I don't remember but these two verses. Here they be :

When I am dead
No cruel words can wound,
No false friends injure or betray
The heart that is but dust,—
Ah ! Well-a-day !

When I am dead
They'll gently fold my hands
Across my breast, and say,
“Poor soul, she is at rest”—
Ah ! Well-a-day !

Every verse begun with “*When I am dead,*” and ended with, “*Ah ! Well-a-day !*” and it was awful sad and harrowin', no mistake.

I took it that Saffo had been disapp'inted in love, and treated shameful by some good-for-nothin' scallywag of a man, and I felt real sorry for her. I wanted to dew somethin' to let her know, so after she set down, I reached out and took her hand and looked at her sympathizin' and meanin', with the tears in my eyes ; but I had my labor for my pains. She only scowled and stared back at me as cold as a statu'. If she had died the next day, I wouldn't 'a' gone to the funeral !

All this time I hadn't kep' track of Hannibal. I'd been so took up with one thing 'n' 'nother, you know—and then he set way down on the other side of the table from me—but now I looked at him to see how Saffo's poetry 'fected him, and—my land! you might have knocked me over with a feather!

He was all settled down in a heap in his chair, and seemed to be slip, slippin', as if he was goin' out of sight under the table eventewally!

"*Boozy! if not intoxicated!*" thinks I to myself, "and me, his wife, president of the '*W. C. T. U.*!'" More yet, Hannibal himself was considered a strick temperance man, a prohibitioner, up home; but, you see, six liker glasses of different shapes and sizes standin' all round his plate, had been tew much for him.

Somethin' had got to be done to once, but I reckoned I was equil to the 'casion.

I whispered to the waiter standin' behind my chair, and told him to carry Major Hawkins a cup o' coffy, strong and hot, immejitly; "*And no more wine!*" says I, with a meanin' look.

Wall, he carried the coffy, and Hannibal drunk it and began to straighten up and 'pear better right off.

And now I obsarved that the hull company was in pretty much the same fix, havin' took more'n what was good for 'em. And they was beginnin' to be noisy. Ladies and all was laughin', reckless like, tellin' stories, singin' songs, and every few

minutes somebody would perpose a "*toast*." I found out a "*toast*" was an excuse for takin' another glass o' wine, you know.

While I was watchin' Hannibal, still feelin' kinder anxious, all of a suddin a young man settin' beside him, that they called Fitz James, springs to his feet and lifts his glass high above his head, his eyes flashin', and his handsome face all of a flame:

"Drink, gentlemen!" he shouts, "drink! Drink once more, to our guest's fair daughter! Car'line is her name, and 'cordin' to her paternal relative's modest estimate, she must be altogether charmin'! Drink, then, gentlemen! drink to little Car'line!"

In a minute every glass was filled and raised, but simultanyous Hannibal riz tew, and stiddyin' himself with one hand on the table, he lifted the other in a gestur' of sollum' protest, as it were.

"Gentlemen," says he, "gentlemen, I object!"

Upon that he drawed himself up gradewal to his full statur' of six foot two, and when he was all up and had got his bearin's, he looked round on 'em carm and stiddy as a clock!

"My young friend here, Mister Fitz James, means well," he continners. "I alone am to blame for the liberty he's took with my daughter's name. You know some men when they've dranked a drop too much, begin to brag, and I guess mebby I'm one o' that kind—'t any rate I bragged—like a gump and a fool, and I didn't know what I was dewin'—about my daughter's good looks and in-

nercent, winnin' ways! But, gentlemen—some on ye must be payrents—” here he stopped, stammered, and begun rubbin' his head, as he alwers does when he's disturbed, and the company took advantage of the pause to pound the table and holler:

“Car'line! Car'line! let's drink to Car'line!”

Hannibal waved his hand as if he was goin' to speak ag'in, and they changed their tune.

“Hear! hear!” they shouted, laughin' as if they considered the hull thing an awful good joke.

Hannibal stood there firm now, as the rock o' Dundee, and I see his jaw set.

“Yes! you hear, all on ye!” he says, between his teeth. “I say it shan't be done! I forbid it! What! put my little girl 'long with the wimmin you've toasted here in Bohemy to-night! Gentlemen, it can't be——” All of a suddin he choked up and stopped. The thought of Car'line seemed to 'fect him powerful. “If you knew her,” he managed to say, finally, “if you knew my little girl, you wouldn't think o' sech a thing—as it is, I, her payrent, must forbid it!”

He looked round on 'em and lifted one hand appealin', then dropped it to his side in helpless elerquence, and set down.

For a minate you could 'a heard a pin drop, it was so still. Some looked sober and some looked mad. Cousin Landsdown looked both. His face was red as a beet, and he smiled dretful sarcastic

as he turned to Hannibal, tryin' to speak careless and onconsarned:

"All right, Major; jest as you say, of course. I am sure the gentlemen are satisfied," he said.

But I was sure they wa'n't satisfied, and I knew that from their standp'int Hannibal must 'pear terrible disagreeable and unaccommodatin'. Not that I would 'a' had him done a mite different! No, I was proud on him! But I hated to have 'em feel hard towards us; and what to do, that was the question.

I thought a minate, then laid my hand on cousin's arm, and looked at him as friendly and be-seechin' as I knew how, and says I:

"Cousin Landsdown, I feel as if we hadn't done our parts towards entertainin' you and your company to-night; what say to my repeatin' some poitry I made up 'bout Car'line—seein' they seem interested in her?"

He brightened up in a minate.

"Good, good!" says he, and when he announced to 'em that Mis' Hawkins would recite one of her own poims, they was all smilin' and good-natered as I could ask. Them Bohemianers 'peared for all the world jest like children. All they wanted was to be amused.

Wall, I begun the poim (there was five verses) and went through from the fust line to the last without a single mistake. Here is the poitry, as I composed it, and as I said it off to 'em that night:

OUR CAR'LINE.

She may be harnsome, our Car'line,
 Of that I won't pertend to say ;
 I only know she's sweeter, brighter
 Than pinks and roses, any day !

She's neither short nor tall, our Car'line,
 Her hair is yellower than gold,
 And fruzzles all around her forrid
 Like some sweet pictered saint of old !

And two sech eyes she has, our Car'line,
 Beseechin', tender, sober, true—
 Until she smiles, and then you wonder
 Whether the rogue ain't foolin' you ?

Her voice so sweet and clear, our Car'line,
 Her motion's graceful as a bird's—
 Here's Car'line nigh as I can git her ;
 I only fail for lack o' words !

Sixteen years old—a child—our Car'line,
 Let not the world that lays beyond
 E'er spile or mar, or make her suffer,
 Our Car'line, that we love so fond !

When I got done they all praised me, and
 Cousin Landsdown took my hand in both his'n
 and squeezed it, and says he :

“By my faith ! fair cousin, you have true po-
 itry in your soul ! I wish we might keep you in
 Bohemy ; you would be an honor to our gild.”

"I'm 'bleeged to ye, I'm sure," says I, "but I guess I'm more fit for Punkinville than for Bohemy," and I couldn't help blushin' to think of myself in one o' them ere decollity dresses!

"Not but what I like you all real well," I continnered, "and I'm sure no folks could be better edicated nor better natered, and I dew feel honored and 'bleeged," says I, ag'in, bowin' fust to Cousin Landsdown and then right and left all round the table.

At this juncter Hannibal riz up and bowed tew, layin' his hand on his heart and lookin' awful grand and imposin'.

"Allow me ter jine in my wife's sentiments," he said; "and now, as we can't stay forever, if you'll excuse us, I guess we'll hafter take our leaves. We didn't git much rest on the boat last night, and we feel pretty well tuckered out." Then he made another bow, and I made a kerchey, and lockin' arms we perceeded to go.

When we got along to where Blossom set at the table, she ketched hold of my hand and pulled me down to her.

"Will you tell me all about little Car'line in the mornin'?" she whispered.

"Yes, dear, yes, I will," said I, and I stooped and kissed her, resolvin' in my own mind that I'd have her come to Punkinville, and let Car'line larn her to be happy in more nateral and inner-cent ways.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE PLAY "CAMILLE."

The next mornin' after the party Cousin Landsdown's wife was sick abed. I nussed her up for a day or two, thinkin' it wa'n't nothin' more'n a sudden cold, the nateral result of wearin' that "decollity" dress, but she grew wuss and finally it turned into a kind of slow fever.

I offered to stay and take care on her, but they wouldn't hear to sp'ilin' our bridle toor that way. So Cousin Landsdown took us to a nice hotel and we settled down for a week of sight-seein'.

I couldn't begin to tell all the strange sights we see, nor the experiences we underwent while we was in New York. Why, if we'd a-stayed till this time, I hain't a doubt but what we could a kep' on goin' and experiencin' and seein', and somethin' new every day! There don't seem to be no end to nothin' in New York, exceptin' the money. Hannibal said how he calkerlated he spent more money there in one week's time than he would in a hull year to home in Punkinville. "But then," said he, "I don't care; 'tain't every day we go on a bridle toor."



AT THE PLAY.

We went to some few places that we wouldn't hardly thought we would. But folks dew things when they're on a toor that they wouldn't no other time, I guess. We did, anyway. For instance, we went to the theater—yes, we went, and I ain't sorry for 't nor 'shamed to own it. I'm free to confess that I think I've committed more sin and got more evil 'fore now to a sewin' circle, than what I did that night to the theater. We was told afterwards that the play we see was a French play, and considered by some immoral, and I was thankful I didn't know it 'fore I went, for then I should 'a' been lookin' for somethin' bad, and so proba'ly found it. "*Hony swarky molly ponts*," you know, which is French, and means if a person is always looking out for evil, he'll be pretty sure to find it wherever he goes, no matter if it's to a prayer-meetin'.

What put it into our heads to go to the theater in the fust place, was a pictur' we see in a store winder. It was right near the hotel where we boarded, and we'd passed it a good many times without noticin' it partick'lar, till one day as we was goin' along, all of a suddin it seemed to 'tract our 'tention, and we stopped to look at it more careful. It was the pictur' of a beautiful young lady, dressed up very peculiar. I hadn't never seen anything like it to home in the Holler nor in Punkinville. She had on a white gownd with a terrible long trail tew it—wall, I should say that without stretchin' it a mite, it would

reach clear from the top to the bottom of our front stairs, and it hadn't no waist to speak on, only a great bokay as big as a wash-dish, pinned on in front, and not the sign of a sleeve—nothin', not even a linen cuff! But she was awful handsome, or would a' been if she'd been dressed like other folks.

"Aint she pretty?" says I to Hannibal. "Let's go and see her act; come!"

I expected nothin' but what Hannibal would be all took a-backwards, but he wa'n't. (You see, he'd been thinkin' on't himself afore I spoke.) So he only looked kinder sheepish, and says he, "What do you s'pose the folks up home would say if we should go? Turn us out o' the meetin'-house, fur's I know."

"Fudge!" says I; "as if we aint old enough to judge for ourselves and go where we're a min' ter! Besides, we ain't obleeged to tell."

I looked up into Hannibal's face as coaxin' as I knew how, and I see he was yieldin' a'ready. It ain't very hard to lead a man when he's headed the way you want him to go, is it? A good deal depends on how he's headed, I find.

Hannibal made quite a show of hangin' off, but bimeby he says, "Oh, wall, I guess we shall haf-ter go, if you're set on't. I'm willin' to indulge ye, reasonable, Ruth Ann, and, as I've said afore, we don't go on a bridle toor every day."

He looked so beneverlent and self-sacrifisin' that I 'most wanted to laugh, but I didn't; I

only squeezed his arm and told him how good he was.

And so we went. We hadn't nary one on us ever been to anything o' the kind, and of course didn't know what we should see or experience when we got there.

Now I ain't exackly what you'd call romancial, perhaps, but I have the faculty or failin' of bein' more 'n common 'fected by what I see and hear. I'm dretful apt to be carried away, as it were—to go off into dreams and feelin's that might seem queer and foolish to some. And, 'cordin'ly that theater imprested me wonderful. I can't begin to tell you how the beauty and the richness and the novelty on 't affected me! The paintin's on the walls—cherubs and angels and flowers, as natural as life; the soft carpits, and seats easy as any sofy to set on, with the gas-lights shimmerin' down over it all, through colored drops, like so many great glowin' jewels—oh, it was beautiful! And as I set there takin' it all in, the music begun to play kinder sweet and low and wavy, and I fell to dreamin'. I dunno what I drempt', nor how to put it into words, but all to once the hull world seemed full and runnin' over of light and beauty and music! The men and women round me seemed noble and grand, and everything—jest as they do in poetry books, you know. And love—oh, love was everywheres! Not the common every-day sort o' love, but different—sweet and dear, like heaven, I guess. That's the way

it seemed to me, and when the music begun to swell gradewally louder 'n louder, my heart swelled with it tew, throbbin' and throbbin' with a feelin' of sech bliss—or misery, I couldn't for the life o' me say which—that I believe I might a died then and there, and never knowed it!

In p'int of fact I s'pose I must 'a' felt faint, and perhaps leaned a grain heavy ag'inst the lady that set next to me, for I was brought down to a realizin' sense by her holdin' somethin' towards me and sayin', "Here, smell of this; it will revive you."

I come tew and was all right in a minit; but I took the thing she offered me, mechanical-like, and thanked her and put it to my nose. It was a queer-lookin' thing as ever I see. It was made of glass, and shaped some like an ambrell when it's shet up, without the handle; and it was 'bout a foot long, I should judge. It 'peared to be a kind of colone bottle, and when I smelt on 't it revived me wonderful. It was powerful strong colone, that's a fact. When I handed it back to the lady, she fished down into her pocket, and took out a little square lump of sugar, and droppin' a few drops on to it, give it to me. "Eat it," she said; "it will do you good." And I done so. If I hadn't a-knowed it was colone out of a pocket-ambrell colone-bottle, I should most 'a' thought I was takin' somethin' stronger.

I concluded them bottles was all the rage, for I see a number of ladies usin' 'em durin' the even-

in', and next day I spoke about it to a lady at the hotel where we boarded. She laughed. "They get boozy on that colone out of them ere bottles," she said; "drop it on to the lumps of sugar and take it so, till sometimes they get pretty well set up."

I couldn't hardly believe it, but she declared it was the truth. I didn't tell Hannibal. I couldn't bear to have him think so poor of womankind: and he jest married to a woman!

The musicianers that was makin' the beautiful music I've spoke on, set down in front of the stage; there was a hull mess on 'em, and they seemed to be playin' mostly on fiddles and horns; all sizes they was. Some o' the biggest fiddles was taller than a man, and the horns ranged all the way up from a tin whistle to a tromboon. But they did make noble music! They played quite a while before the show begun, and when they wound up, oh, I never did hear anything like it! They all put in jest as tight as they could, and played faster'n faster, till you couldn't see the fiddle bows move at all, nor tell where one toot of the horns left off and t' other begun, and they finished up with a long onairthly crash, enough to wake the dead! Then to cap all, what did them musicianers dew, but drop their instruments and scramble head-over-heels down in under the floor somewheres out o' sight! In less'n two minutes they'd all disappeared—gone—everyone on 'em, nobody knew where! And

what's more, they stayed there till it was time to play ag'in; then they popped up through the floor, one to a time like a jack out of a box, and set down to their music. I thought they desarved better treatment. Why couldn't they 'a set above ground, like other folks, and seen the play, when they hadn't nothin' else to dew, instid o' bein' stived away under the floor 'mongst the cobwebs and spiders!

Now sence I've divulgated one mortifyin' secret in regard to the habits o' my own sex, perhaps 'taint no more'n fair that I should tell what I found out about the men that same night.

The play seemed to be divided into parts—"acts" they called 'em—and when they let the curtain down after the fust act, the musicianers struck up a lively tune and the men all over the house begun to git up and go out. I noticed they left their ladies behind, and I thought that was queer. Bimeby they come stragglin' along in ag'in and set down. The next time the curtain dropped, they done the very same thing, and, as nigh's I could calkerlate, 'bout the same individewals went out. A young man that set jest beyend me was one, and half a dozen of us ladies had to stand up to let him pass. I see some lookin' grumpy 'bout it, but I felt sorry for him. I thought how embarissed he must feel, and when he come along by me, I says, "Young man, I hope you ain't onwell?" He colored up red's a beet,

but didn't make no reply, and everybody that heerd me smiled.

The lady settin' beside o' me whispered in my ear, and says she: "These men go out to git a drink; didn't you know it?"

"No, I didn't," says I. "Why, they're as dry as a pack o' school-boys, ain't they? I should think it would be a good plan to have a pail and a dipper and pass round the water, as they dew in the deestrick schools up home. Save routin' us out of our seats so much."

The lady shrugged up her shoulders and laughed. "'Tain't *water* they want," says she, "it's *somethin' stronger*!"

"Oh, dear me! You don't say so!" says I. I was dumfounded! Hannibal seemed to feel kinder shamed on me. "You might 'a knowed," says he. "It ain't likely they'd have all these ere recesses for nothin'!"

When that young man come back to his seat I didn't say a word, but I tried to let him know by my looks what I thought of sech dewin's!

And now we come to the play. As I have already remarked, it was a French play; the name on't, as nigh's I can git it, was "Cameel." Cameel was a girl—the one we see in the pictur', you know—and she seemed inclined to do about right, I thought, but things kinder worked ag'inst her. 'Cordin' to her tell, she was all alone in the world, and her health was poor—'peared to

be consumptive, though I must say she looked healthy enough in the pictur', but I'm tellin' how she 'peared in the play—and she was troubled with a terrible hackin' cough.

Now I wanten stop and say right here, that *Dr. Smith's Cough Balsum will cure a cough* ten times out o' nine, and I know it! And I made up my mind to tell Cameel about it when she got through that night. A cough orter be took in time.

Cameel was so's to be about, of course, and nobody seemed to realize her condition. She was waited on by a number of young men, but she didn't really love but jest one. His name was "Armawn," and he set his eyes by her—it did beat all how he 'peared to love her!

It was real interestin' to see 'em together. She was kinder pert and sassy at times, but she seemed to know jest how fur to go, and jest how much show of 'fection he could stan' to once. I thought there was a good deal in that, and I de-tarmined to bear it in mind hereafter in respeck to Hannibal. But la! it don't seem as if any two folks ever did love one 'nother jest like them two! And they acted it all out beautiful and free; wa'n't the least mite bashful nor awk'ard 'bout it. 'T ain't so up our way. The young men go round kinder sheepish and sly; seem to think makin' love to a girl is some kind of a illegitermit business—somethin' to feel a little ashamed on. As if a good honest affection wa'n't the noblest sentiment of the human heart!

Cameel seemed to have consider'ble company, both men and women. I didn't exactly like the 'pearance of some on 'em. They was good, likely folks, fur's I know, but altogether different from what I'd been used to. I took it they was French, and though I could see they done their best to speak plain, I couldn't understand more'n half they said.

But to go on with the story. It seemed that this Armawn belonged to an awful high-toned, big-feelin' family, and his sister was engaged to be married to the son of another family jest as grand, and when they heerd that Armawn was thinkin' of marryin' Cameel, who wa'n't high-borned no time, and had even done sech a thing as to work for a livin', they was all crushed to the earth, and Armawn's father detarmined that somethin' must be done to once.

He knew well enough that Armawn wouldn't give up Cameel of his own accord, so what does he dew but go to her and tell her jest how things stood; how his daughter's intended refused to marry into a family that had sech a disgrace in prospeck, how his daughter's heart would be broke, and his own gray hairs brought in sorrer to the grave. As for Armawn, he said it was only Cameel's beauty that he loved; she wa'n't his equil in nothin', and when her fust wrinkle come, he would realize the sacerfise he had made, and would hate and dispise her ever after. Finally, he 'pealed to her in a very feelin' way—feelin' for

himself and everybody else but her—to give up Armawn for good and all.

Cameel bore it pretty well till he spoke about her beauty and the wrinkle. That seemed to break her all up; and oh! how she did cough! I guess for a minute the old gentleman thought whuther no he hadn't gone too fur, and felt kinder scairt, for he led her to a chair and made her set down, and brought her a drink o' water.

Then, as well as she could, between coughin' and cryin', Cameel told him how poor her health was, and that she couldn't live long anyway, and begged on him to 'low her the blessin' of Armawn's love what little time she had to live; she even went down on her knees to him, and a pitiful sight it was to see her there, sobbin' and coughin', her pretty white dress layin' round her on the floor—but it wa'n't no kind o' use! The old he'thin begun ag'in, and kep' at her, till he actewally convinced her that she couldn't secure Armawn's well-bein' and his daughter's, and his'n, and everybody's else but her own, unless she give him up wholly and etarnally. And, to make a thur-rer job on't, he wanted her to lie, and tell Armawn that she didn't love him any more, she loved somebody else. And finally the poor girl, more dead than alive, promised everything he wanted.

Oh, that 'ere interview between them two was awful 'fectin' and no mistake! I had all I could do to set still in my seat and not interfere, though it's ag'inst my principles as a gineral thing to

meddle in other folks's family affairs. But I did feel for Cameel! And I wa'n't the only one! A good many shed tears, and some resorted ter subterfuges sech as coughin' and blowin' their noses violent. *I cried*, and I ain't ashamed ter own it. So did Hannibal, and I was proud on him.

Wall, the upshot on 't was, that the next time Armawn come, Cameel done as she had promised, though I could see that it was like pullin' eye-teeth, and Armawn went off t'arin' mad and left her. But the sacerfise proved to be too much for Cameel! She went right into a gallopin' consumption, pined all away to skin and bones, and finally died there on the stage! But she died in Armawn's arms! You see, jest at the last, the old gentleman relented. I s'pose he'd got his daughter comfortably married, and he proba'ly knew that Cameel was dyin'—anyhow, he told Armawn the hull story; how nobly Cameel had lied to him and everything, and they come together ag'in and might 'a' been happy, but it was too late! As I said, she died in Armawn's arms; which was better'n nothin', but I declare it did seem as if I couldn't let her die so!

"Oh," says I to the lady beside on me, "oh, if Cameel could only 'a' had that cough medicine before the disease got fairly seated—if she only could!"

"What *dew* you mean?" says the lady, starin'.
 "It's only a play, you know."

"You needn't tell me!" says I. "If that girl

ain't dead, she's in the very last stages! I knew the minute she was struck with death! I've got eyes!"

But she insisted on't Cameel was all right, and she said perhaps we would feel better if Hannibal should go round behind the curtain and see her. She said a good many gentlemen done so, and it was considered perfeckly proper. I was glad enough to have Hannibal go, and he said if she wa'n't too fur gone he'd certainly tell her about the cough balsum.

In a few minutes back he come, chirk and smilin', and carryin' a little bokay in his hand. He said Cameel *was* alive and bloomin' as a rosy; that he found her laughin' and carryin' on with a lot of young men, but when he told her how his wife was worried about her, and had sent him to inquire after her health, she sobered down and looked for a minute as if she was goin' to cry or somethin', then she hands him the little bokay and says, real sweet:

"Give your wife these flowers with my grateful compliments, and tell her I was never sick a day in my life."

And Hannibal said she did look the pictur' of health. But I can't help thinkin' there might be sech a thing as carryin' these ere dyin' plays too fur.



CHAPTER V.

CAR'LINE.

We was in New York about ten days in all, and we enjoyed every minate of it. No new married couple ever had a pleasanter bridle toor than what we did. But we was glad to go home, after all, and Hannibal says to me :

“ Ruth Ann, it's well enough to go away once in a while on a bridle toor or so, but for a stiddy thing, give me home ;” and I 'greed with him.

My home was to be in Punkinville now, instid o' Craney Holler, but the little country towns in New England are pretty much alike, and I knew about what to expect. One thing, I lotted on havin' Car'line. From what I'd seen of her, I judged there wa'n't a more lovable girl nor a better girl in the world, and I'd took her to my heart a'ready, and, bless her! she'd took me to hern, too !

By the time we got home from our bridle toor her bangs had growed out all right ; leastways,

I didn't see nothin' the matter of 'em. But I don't know who could find fault with her bangs or anything else about Car'line when once she stood afore 'em!

I described her as well's I could in the poem I read to them Bohemianers that night at the party, so perhaps it ain't wuth while to say any more here.

Car'line seemed like a child, and she was a child—only sixteen, goin' on seventeen—but she'd had plenty of beaux a'ready 'cordin' to her par's tell; and jest afore we was married he says to me, dretful anxious and downhearted:

"Ruth Ann, I'm 'fraid Car'line 'll be a great care to you—or ruther, the fellers will, that's alwers hangin' round her. The dum' gumps!"

"Hannibal, now don't you worry," I answers; "I'll resk 'em. They can't be no wuss'n meazles and 'hoopin' cough and all them other diseazes I should had to contend with if she was younger. I'm heartily thankful she's got through with them, but as for beaux—la! a young girl without beaux would be a mounstrosity!" says I.

"Oh, wall, Car'line ain't much of a mounstrosity, I take it," says Hannibal, drawin' himself up. (He's awful proud of Car'line, you know.)

Before I say any more about Car'line, I must stop right here and relate the trunk eppersode, because it is connected intimitt with her hist'ry.

When Hannibal and me come home from our weddin' toor, his trunk got changed somehow.



CAR'LINE.

Mine was mine all right, but his'n was somebody's else. He and the depo-master couldn't make nothin' satisfactory out between 'em, only that the strange trunk had follered mine from New York; and there wa'n't no name nor any way to tell who it belonged to, nor where he lived—nothin' except the initials R. I. G. in big letters.

We concluded it was a swap, and R. I. G., whoever he was, had got Hannibal's trunk, with his name and address tacked onto it in plain letters, and we naterally supposed he'd know enough to write and have the thing fixed proper. But we waited a week or two without hearin' a word, and we begun to think we never should; so, come Saturday night, Mr. Hawkins fitted a key to the trunk, and says to me and Car'line:

"Come, let's go'n open Mr. R. I. G.'s trunk."

Did you ever open a trunk that belonged to an unknown individewal? A trunk whose contents you knew nothin' about, absolutely, whuther male or female, rags, or silks and satings, dynermite or sassages?

I tell you I never experienced a queerer sensation than what I did settin' there on that ere trunk tryin' to spunk up courage to let Hannibal open it. And Car'line felt jest as narvous about it as I did.

But much as we hung back, we was dyin' to know what was in it, and so finally we said: "Open it," though we both felt afeared we might

be blowed to atoms the next minute. Sech is woman's curiosity! (Not but what Hannibal was every mite and grain as curious as we was, you know.)

Wall, he put in the key, give it a turn, and lifted the led. We all hild our breaths and looked, and I know I couldn't a felt fainter if I'd seen R. I. G. himself laid out there in that top tray in his grave clo'es!

But massy sakes! there wa'n't nothin' in the world there to hurt anybody! Only a pile o' clean b'iled shirts, all done up spick and span, and glistenin' white as snow! We took 'em out and found underneath a complete outfit of men's clo'es, the nicest and nobbiest we ever set eyes on. Mr. Rig—as we concluded to call him—whoever he was, had good clo'es and plenty of 'em.

There was other things besides clo'es in the trunk, things we didn't know the name nor the use of. What 'tracted Car'line's 'tention in partik'lar was a red luther box full of queer little tools. Some was iv'ry and some was steel, but they all looked too small and dainty for a man to work with.

Car'line showed 'em to me and blushed and laughed.

"He must a'meant 'em for a present to his girl," says she. "See, her name is on the kiver." And sure enough there it was in gilt letters, "*Manicure.*"

"Too bad she can't have her present," says

Car'line; "if we only knew what's her other name, and where she lives, we could send 'em to her, and find out about Mr. Rig."

"I s'pose that's jest her given name." She said it over kinder soft to herself. "Manicure, Manicure, pretty name, ain't it, mar?" says she.

Wall, them clo'es was all too small for Hannibal, and too young-lookin'. They everdently belonged to some rich city chap, for there wa'n't no paper collars, nor overhalls, nor checkered shirts. Everything was costly and reg'lar go-to-meetin' style, ye know.

Car'line thought they was all too cute for anything. "Oh, my!" says she, holdin' up a lavender kid glove and a little patent luther boot, "wouldn't the Punkinville boys stare to see Mr. Rig with these on?"

As there didn't seem to be anything else to do, we put the trunk away in the spare chamber and left it. Hannibal said he reckoned he'd got the best on't, even if he couldn't wear the clo'es, for he didn't vally his own trunk so great, there wa'n't much in it. And he said Car'line should have Mr. Rig's things for a weddin' present to her husband, if she'd only git a feller to fit 'em.

Car'line was crazy to have a pianner. She run of a notion that she could learn to play on one real easy. She'd picked out a few tunes a'ready on one o' the neighbor's seraphims, and now she wanted a pianner of her own. So her par he

come to me private and asked me what I thought, and whuther no I would proba'ly play on it any myself if we had one.

"*Me* play on a pianner!" says I. "No Hannibal, I'm 'bleeged to ye!" Once when I was a girl I was stoppin' down country with Aunt Harri't, and she coaxed me into takin' some lessons. I begun and took jest three, but that was a plenty. I remember to this day how I felt settin' there histed up onto that stool afore that instrument! Half an hour to a time, four times a day I set there, with nothin' to occerpy me but jest puttin' down and takin' up fust one finger, then t'other, on them inanimated iv'rys! What torture I suffered! How my fingers ached, and how my back and head ached! And how at the end of them two hours I tried to think I'd 'complished somethin', when I knew all the time I hadn't! How I looked for'ards and see nothin' but the same eternal misery, and how discouraged and miser'ble I was! I stood it three weeks and then I went to Aunt Harri't, and says I:

"Aunt Harri't, I've come to the conclusion that if I must play on somethin', I'll git me a hand-organ. I can turn a crank as well as anybody, but I can't learn to play the pianner!" And I couldn't.

When I see girls practisin' from two to four hours a day, I wonder what they're made on. They must be constitooted altogetther different

from what I be ; in p'int of fact I know they are. And Car'line was.

Why I've seen her set down to the pianner as eager as she would to a good meal o' vittles when she was hungry, and touch the keys as lovin' and caressin' as if they was somethin' dear and precious. And all the time she played she'd have a sorter wropped-up, onairthly look on her face that almost scairt me. It wa'n't her fingers that played, it was somethin' inside of her. *It was genyus* ; and a genyus for anything, I don't care what, makes the labor of dewin' on't light.

But if a child hain't no nateral hankering after music—no genyus for it—I say it's cruelty to animals to tie him down to a pianner or a fiddle, and it's sure to ruin his disposition, if it don't the spine of his back.

Now, why not let him do somethin' that will give him solid comfort, instead o' torture? Perhaps he can draw, or paint picters, or, better still, work with tools—like carpenterin' or so—if he's a boy. If he can't do nothin' but saw wood and hoe pertaters, if he loves it, in the name of humanity let him do it, and feel the bliss of doin' somethin' well.

In my 'pinion there's two things in partick'lar that nobody should ever undertake to do, unless they can't possibly help it, viz., namely: to write poitry and play music. So now, when Car'line begun to talk pianner I says to her:

“ Child, do you love music better'n you love to

eat?" and she answers, all eager and trembly, "Yes, mar, I believe I do," and I says, "All right, you shall have a pianner." And then I perposed that we take a boarder for the summer and so help earn it. We hadn't work enough to hurt ary one of us, and the house was plenty big to 'commodate another.

Car'line seemed pleased with the idee, but her par put it down at fust. Said how he "wa'n't goin' to have his wimmin folks takin' in work," and so on, but bimeby he give in, and we advertised in a New York paper.

We had a good many letters from different folks, and among 'em was one from a young man who signed his name Richard Gordon. We thought it might be as well to take him as anybody, so he come. He was a harnsome, fine 'pearin' young man as one could wish to see, and he had a way with him that told us to once that he hadn't never been used to plain country livin' before. He didn't seem to feel big, exactly, but he was different from the rest on us, ye know. He said how he was an orphan, and that drawed me to him; but when he said he'd been *dissipatin'* a little too much and his physician recommended a quiet life for a while, I felt like death.

"Oh, dear!" thinks I, "what an example for Hannibal." I felt sorry for the young man, too, and I says real kind:

"Mister Gordon, I hope you'll find Punkinville

a good place to reform in. If you'll go to the temperance meetin's and sign the pledge, we'll 'sist and help you all we can. Only you must be in 'arnest yourself, and fight and wrastle against your appetite. But we'll 'sist you," says I, "we'll 'sist you, depend on't."

He smiled at this, and says he :

"Dear Mrs. Hawkins, your sympathy and 'sistance would be received most grateful indeed, but you slightly misunderstand my meanin'. My 'dissipation' has only been in goin' to too many balls and parties, and that sort of thing. My habits in respeck to drinkin' is all right, I assure you."

And I guess he spoke the truth, for he hain't never dranked a drop to my knowledge ; but I felt relieved to hear him say it, and told him so, and we was the best of friends to once. After that I found out all about him by writing to Hannibal's cousin Landsdown, that lives in Bohemy, New York, you remember.

But about that pianner. You know we was goin' to help buy it with the board money. Well, we never paid a cent towards it, for the very day our boarder 'rived, 'long come the pianner, too ! Mr. Hawkins done it to surprise us, and surprised enough we was. And it did beat all how fast Car'line learned to play. It wa'n't but a few weeks 'fore she could play the Moody and Sankey pieces in No. 1 and 2, and the fust time she sung and played of a Sunday night to her par, he

wiped his eyes and said "he reckoned the pianer was all paid for."

Car'line's voice wa'n't powerful, but it was persuadin' as an angel's. Let anybody, I don't care who 'tis, nor what he believes, hear our Car'line sing, "I Need Thee Every Hour," and he will feel a longin' in his soul, a reachin' out after God, if he never did before.

I think it was Car'line's singin' more'n her beauty that made Mr. Gordon fall in love with her. Anyway, he took to her at fust, though we didn't think of sech a thing as love between 'em—strange we didn't, too. But it was quite a while before I begun to realize how things was goin' on.

He stayed all summer and 'long into the fall, and by that time all Punkinville knew what he was up to. He'd giv' Car'line a ring for a filipeen present, and asked her if she would wear a diamond one bimeby.

"Jest think, mar," says Car'line, when she told me, "I shall have the fust di'mond ring in Punkinville!"

('Twa'n't exactly like Car'line to say that, but I guess there's consider'ble human natur' in the best of girls; there was in Car'line, anyway.)

One day, Mr. Gordon went a-fishin' and got ketched in a shower, and come home wet as a drowned rat. He said how he "hadn't got no more clo'es as thick as them he'd been wearin', and he was afraid he might git cold changin' from

thick to thin," and he didn't know what to do. Car'line happened to think of *that trunk*, and says she:

"Mar, there's jest the thing among them clo'es, and I should think Richard and Mr. Rig might be about the same size."

She went and got the clo'es and carried 'em to Richard's door, and pretty soon he come down with 'em on, and we exclaimed to once that they fitted him for all the world as if they's made for him.

He stood kinder queer and bewildered like before the glass, and looked at himself.

"Where did you get these ere clo'es?" he asked. And I told him in a trunk that come to us by mistake. "And," says I, "there's a lot more, and other things besides."

"Let's see 'em," says he. So we took him into the spare chamber, and the minute he set eyes on the trunk he slaps his hand on his knee, and says:

"*My trunk*, by jove!"

"Oh! is it!" screams Car'line. "Then you're *Mr. Rig*! Mar, he's *Mr. Rig*! oh, dear, oh, dear!"

"*Mr. Rig*!" he repeats over after her, lookin' from one to t'other on us inquiren'.

"Why yes, don't you see?" and Car'line pints to the letters R. I. G. "But what does the 'I' stand for?" she asks.

Then he looked and laughed. "R. I. G.—Richard Ingram Gordon," says he. "That's my name, of course. So I'm *Mr. Rig*, be I? How droll!"

You see we'd spoke of Mr. Rig time and ag'in, so the name was familiar to him as pea-soup.

"How strange we never thought on't before," says Car'line. "But where's par's trunk? Have you got it, Richard?"

"No, I hain't got nobody's trunk. I lost this on my way from New York to the mountains last summer, and it made me no end of trouble. But here it is. Wall, wall! But the clo'es come real handy to-day, didn't they?"

He turned 'em over kinder careless, as if they wa'n't of much vally to him. They was a year old now, and I s'pose he considered 'em all gone by and out of stile.

When he come to the little luther box with Manicure's name on it, he opened it and looked at the little tools, and finally carried it away to his room and set it on the table.

Goin' down-stairs Car'line says to me :

"That 'Manicure' will get her present now, after all."

And I answers "Yes," but I didn't think much about it.

After this little eppersode happened, all to once Car'line seemed to change in her manners towards Richard Gordon. When he spoke to her she answered stiff and proper, instid of laughin' and sassy as she used to, and she kep' out of his way all she possibly could.

He was terribly cut up; didn't know what to make on't of course, and hung round, tryin' to git

a word with her alone, but she wouldn't give him no chance. It was so for a hull week, till I s'pose he couldn't stan' it no longer, for, come Sunday mornin', he speaks right up at the breakfast-table 'fore all of us and says :

"Miss Car'line, will you walk to church with me this mornin'?"

Car'line looked at him for a minute, kinder half defyin', half cryin', but somethin' compelled her apparently, for she answered so low and trembly you couldn't hardly hear.

"Yes—I dunno' but what I will," then run off upstairs fast as she could go.

I suspicioned at the time that they would come to an understandin' with one another on the way to meetin', and they did. Car'line told me all about it that night. She alwers confides in me as if we's two girls together, bless her heart!

It seems they took the cross-road through the woods. It was a good deal further, but they didn't care, they had plenty of time.

They walked along quite a piece without speakin', and pretty soon Richard took hold of Car'line's hand and lifted it up and looked at it.

"Car'line," says he, "where's the little ring I gave you? Have you lost it?" (She had on mitts—ginerally wore 'em in hot weather.)

She snatched away her hand, and, says she: "No, I hain't lost it, but I ain't goin' to wear it any more—never! You may have it to give to *Manicure!*"

"To give to *who*?" he asks, stoppin' still in the road, and lookin' at her with his mouth wide open. "*To give to who*?"

"Why, to that other girl. You know better'n I do, and you needn't pretend to look so inner-cent!" says Car'line, real hystericky. "I do hate and despise *a cheat*—so there!" says she.

"*A cheat*! Car'line, who's a cheat?" he asks, dretful stern. "Hain't I paid my board bills—hain't I paid all my bills? Who's been lyin' round about me, I'd like to know?"

Car'line laughed bitter. "You men think as long as you pay your board and store bills you're all right," she said. "You forgit that you owe somethin' to girls' hearts and feelin's."

"Car'line! Car'line! what do you mean?" he said, droppin' onto a big rock and pullin' her down side of him. She kivered her face with her hands and hitched away from him, but he drawed her up close and took down her hands and held 'em tight in his'n.

"Now, Car'line," he says, lovin' but firm, "you tell me what I've done!"

She dropped her head and blushed furious. "It's—it's that other girl—Manicure," she says.

"Manicure, Manicure," repeats Richard, lookin' wild.

"Yes! you know who I mean. Her name is on the box you're keepin' for her. Oh, Richard, who is she, and where is she? Tell me!"

Then he hollered and laughed as if he'd die.

"Oh, Car'line, Car'line!" says he bimeby, when he got so he could speak. "What a dear little ignorant goose you be!" and he hugged and kissed her over 'n' over as if he was crazy; and Car'line, half mad, half ashamed, had to submit whuther no. But when he stops at last to git his breath, she begins agin, poutin':

"Who is she, Richard? Who is Manicure? I will know!"

Then he tells her all about it, and says she shall have the box, and he will show her how to



use the little tools, though her fingers are pretty enough without any manicuring, and he kisses them again and again to prove he means it. And when Car'line finds out what a silly blunder it all is, she hides her face and feels wuss'n ever, and cries, and asks Richard if he ain't ashamed of lovin' sech a silly little gump.

And he tells her how he ain't, how he thinks she's jest right as she is in every single respeck but one. He'd like to change her name to his'n — Hawkins to Gordon — right away, if she is willin'.

Then they both laugh and feel better, and there

they set and talk and talk, till the last bell begins to ring, then they go sarnterin' along the fields to meetin'.

And the fields was paradise, and the church was heaven to them two that day, because they was together! But you know and I know how everything seemed to 'em; so what's the use of my sayin' any more!

CHAPTER VI.

MAJOR HAWKINS'S "REGIMENT."

I've noticed that men-folks are dretful apt to git out o' kilter once in a while; in their healths, I mean, now. It was so with Hannibal, anyway.

As sure as business slacked up a little, he'd begin to complain of not feelin' well. Sometimes it was one thing, sometimes another, but the spring after we was married he got the idee into his head that he was dyspeptick. He wa'n't—he was hearty as a bear—but I had to humor him and putter and fuss over him all the same.

I cooked all sorts o' sickly dishes, oatmeal, rolled oats and cracked wheat—wall, every kind of a *mush* you could name—and then we tackled the coffy. He thought he was bilyus, and so he must do somethin' about his coffy. He was awful fond of it, and I don't think he ever had any real notion of givin' it up, but we begun to perform all the different operations onto it. We powdered it, filtered it, and steeped it cold and hot, we tried coffy of the male sect, and finally resorted to subterfuges and made coffy of everything in natur'

but coffy. We tried barley, dandylion, and brown bread; then he drank coco' a spell, then shells, but none of 'em seemed jest the thing. At last Hannibal brought home a bottle of "Mooney's Extrack," and that come the nighest to fillin' the bill of anything yet. That is, he liked it the best, got attached tew it, so to speak, right off.

But one mornin' I happened to taste on't, and I see in a minute jest how it was and all about it! I set the tumbler down and looked at Hannibal, and says to him, pretty severe, I tell you:

"Most as good as whiskey, ain't it?—and your wife president of the 'W. C. T. U.!' Husband, I'm ashamed on ye!"

"Hang it!" says he, dretful sheepish, "what shall I drink? Hain't we tried everything under the sun—everything but water! And you wouldn't condem' me to drink plain water, would ye?"

"Drink something that ain't a deceit and a snare!" says I. "None of them other things hurt ye, nor the real coffy didn't, nuther, and you'd know it if you wa'n't a gump and a fool! I knew it all the time," says I.

"You did!" he says, kicking the leg of the table; "then why didn't you say so, hey?"

"Because you wouldn't be satisfied till you'd fugled and fussed jest about so much; that's why," says I.

Wall, next mornin' he went back to the coffy,

common coffy, common gender and all, but he couldn't give up his favorite idee of bein' bilyus, and he got into the habit of lookin' at his tongue forty times a day. No matter what he was dewin',—readin', carpenterin', or what (for he was kinder repairin' and dewin' odd jobs round the house, seein' business at the mill was slack)—he'd leave off, drop everything once in about so often, and go to the lookin'-glass, run out his tongue as fur as he could, and stare and look at it a spell, and then shake his head with sech an expression of low sperits and misery on his countenants as made me and daughter Car'line both feel dismal enough. He was the queerest person about takin' medicine that I ever see. The doctor left him a bottle of stuff and told him to take a teaspoonful three times a day, that was the dose; but he seemed to arger if a small dose would help him, a bigger one would do him good in perportion. So he'd take a double dose reg'lar, and every few minutes all day long he'd go to the cubbard and take a swaller or two besides.

It was a wonder it didn't kill him. But it didn't, and it didn't cure him nuther; he continered to lay round the house for a couple of weeks, and show all the symptims of hypo—it wa'n't nothin' else under the sun, mind ye—till finally he began to talk about sellin' out the mill and settlin' up his worldly affairs. Then I felt worried in 'arnest, for though I was morilly sartin that nothin' ailded him (his health, I mean), I knew

that he could die of oddity, if he so detarmined, and I was afraid he would. I didn't know what to dew, but after ponderin' over the matter, and prayin' over it tew, I concluded to go and consult along with Doctor Bonder myself, private. So I goes to him and I says:

"Doctor, Major Hawkins ain't sick more'n the cat, and you know it as well as I do, but some-thin's got to be done. He's got to have his fill of dosin' and nussin'; that's what he's started in for, and that's what he will have. Now I think if he should be told to do some dretful hard, disagreeable things, plenty of 'em, and systematic, too, he'd imagine he was better right away, and in consequents he would be. What do you say, doctor? What say to puttin' him through a regular course of treatment?"

The old doctor laughed, but finally 'greed to it, and we laid our heads together and concocted up what the doctor called a "*regiment*," a sort of a program it 'peared to be; and it was labored and complicated enough to suit even old Cap'n Na'mun himself, that the Bible tells about, you know. Yes, I hain't a doubt but what Hannibal's "*regiment*" would 'a' suited Na'mun to a T. I tell you, men want a fuss made when they're sick, or when they think they be, which amounts to the same thing. Here's the "*regiment*" in part; we writ it all out on a big sheet of paper, so that Hannibal might be imprested with its importance. See?

1. "Immejitly on risin' in the mornin', a cold shower-bath, plenty of water, follered by vigorous use of the flesh-brush. After the bath a horseback ride of not less than two mil'ds."

N.B. I orter tell you, perhaps, that Hannibal ain't inclined to be very active naterally, and he hates baths of any kind, and horseback ridin' too, like pizen.

2. "Breakfast of oatmeal and stewed crambries, and a cup o' strong sage-tea."

Before the doctor perscribed on the dinner, he asked me if there was any vittles the patient dispised particklar, and I mentioned a few.

3. "Dinner: Stewed beans or biled codfish. No meat allowed.

4. "After dinner a nap of not less than one hour."

You see we knew well enough that he wouldn't go to sleep nice and comfortable, but would prob'ly put in his time thrashin' round and thinkin' what a mean dinner he'd had.

5. "Supper: Cold bread and crambry sauce." (He dispised crambries!)

6. "After supper a walk of not less than one mil'd.

7. "A cold shower-bath before retirin'.

8. "After each meal, and on goin' to bed, a tumblerful of thoro'wort-tea."

There was a lot more, but these was the main orders.

When I onrolled the papper and showed it to

Hannibal, and drawed down my face and told him solum and serious that them ere was the doctor's orders, he seemed mitily pleased.

"That looks sunthin' like," says he. "Why, we hain't never really done nothin', never really tackled the disease before," says he.

"Wall, we'll tackle it now in arnest," says I.

"Yes," he continers; "I've been satisfied in my own mind for a good while, that if I wanted to *live* I'd got to work for it, and work hard."

"Wall, Hannibal," says I, p'intin' to the "*regiment*," "here's work enough, and hard work too."

To cut a long story short, he tended right to himself and obeyed them orders—for *jest three days*—and it cured him! That is, he was so much sicker of the treatment than he was of the disease, that it amounted to a cure, practically speakin'.

On the evenin' of the fourth day, when it come along time for him to take his walk, he begun to hang round me and 'pear uncommon 'fectionate. Finally he says, real nice and coaxin':

"Ruth Ann, don't you wanter go to walk with me to-night? Dew; I feel as if I should like your comp'ny," says he.

"I'm obleeged to ye, Hannibal, I'm sure," I answers, real amiable, "but much as I should enjoy to go, I don't see how I can. There's the clo'es to sprinkle and the bread to set; and besides, I don't really feel to need the exercise."

He hove a terrible sigh and started off alone.

When he come back he begun hangin' 'round ag'in, and when the clock struck nine, he looked up, and said he :

"I've a good min' not to take that ere blarsted shower-bath to-night; I'll drink the yerb tea—but I hain't much 'pinion o' shower-baths, any ways. Ruth Ann?"

He looked at me awful questionin', but I kep' still and didn't open my head. He waited a minute for me to speak, then he says, right out:

"What do you think, Ruth Ann?"

"I think," I answers, very impressive like, "that if I was you, I should continner to stick to the '*regiment*' unabridged, till I was cured, if it killed me!"

He didn't seem to see nothin' out o' reason in my answer, but took it discouragin', and his countenants fell.

"You would, would ye?" he grumbled.

"Yes; in my 'pinion, when you feel that your disease is cured, then is the time to give up the treatment, not before," said I, firm as a rock.

He didn't say no more, *but he didn't take the shower-bath.*

The next mornin' he got up and went out to the barn and done his chores, and come back whis'lin' gay as a young boy. It did my heart good to hear him.

I was jest gettin' out the spider to fry the ham and eggs for my breakfast and Car'line's; when I got 'em on the stove a dewin' he come and stood

beside o' me, with his hands under his coat-tails, and looked at 'em awful longin'. They did look good, that's a fact, and they smelt good, too.

"Ruth Ann," said he, finally, tryin' to speak unconsarned and ordinary, "I guess you may put in a couple of eggs for me this mornin'. I'm feelin' fust rate now, and am goin' to eat what the rest of the family do. That '*regiment*' has fetched me right up—beats all, don't it?"

"Yes, it does," said I, tickled enough to dance a hornpipe right there, for I knew he was cured! And the best of it was, he staid cured; whatever else he's had for odd streaks sence, he hain't never had no more dispepsy to this day. But I put the "*regiment*" away careful where I could clap my hand ontew it any time in case of need.

CHAPTER VII.

AUNT BETSEY'S BOUDOIR.

When daughter Car'line was married, she had jest exactly one hundred and ninety-nine presents, and after we'd counted 'em over and found how it was, her par laughed, and says he :

"I guess we'd better make it an even two hundred," and 'cordin'ly he went down to the store, and bought her a nice wooden choppin' bowl ; it was a harnsome one, and a good one, made right out o' the heart of a rock maple tree. Car'line seemed pleased enough with it, but afterward when her par wa'n't round, she said to me, private, that "like's not she shouldn't ever use it. She didn't believe they e't much hash in New York City " (there's where she was goin' to to live, you know.) But she said how she could gild it over on the outside, and use it for a *jardinnyair* (which is the French for flower-pot), in her conservatory, and it would be jest the thing.

I couldn't begin to tell you what the one hundred and ninety-nine presents was, but I'll try to mention some on 'em. A good many wa'n't exactly fit to go into a nice New York house, and a

rich man's house at that (for Mister Gordon, her husband, was awful rich), though they'd do fust rate for Punkinville.

Car'line knew how onsootable they was, and she laughed over more'n one of 'em, but she cried too, for they showed how much the folks set by her, and she knew what sackerfices a good many underwent in order to give 'em to her.

The day before the weddin', we spread 'em all out in the spare chamber, and took Richard in to see 'em.

There was two pairs of white woollen stockin's, with little short legs, sech as our gran'mothers used to wear; they was from Aunt Sally Baker, she knit 'em herself. There was a number o' drawed in rugs, enough to kiver our spare chamber floor 'bout over; one of 'em was from Mis' Deacon Laton, and had great purple roses on it. That was the harnsomet.

Then there was a risin' sun bed quilt pieced up out of red and yeller calico, from Square Babbitt's wife, a hair wreath in an oval black-walnut frame, from Mis' Bangs, with her own hair and Mister Bangses made into great big flowers in the middle, and the Bangs children's hair in smaller flowers all around the outside. Car'line said how hair work was all "gone by;" I was sorry, for I thought that wreath was ruther pretty and it must 'a' been a sight of work to dew it. There was tidies, and chair kivers—oh, a master lot on 'em, and there was several painted picters.

Now I ain't much of a judge o' sech things, and I should 'a' said them picters looked middlin' well; but Richard said he reckoned it wouldn't be contrary to Scriptur' to worship ary one of 'em, because they wa'n't no likeness of anything in the airth or in the waters under the airth. But if not wicked, he 'lowed it would be mighty poor taste. That's what he said any way.

Serinth Ann Gribbin, she give the cap sheaf of a picter. It was an ile paintin' in a harnsome gilt frame, and repersented a brook with a mount'in set down beside on't, and a large tree growin' in a curi's kind of a way, part out of the mount'in' and part out of the water—it was terrible curi's, but the branches hung down beautiful and green and looked refreshin'. There was a goose—I took her to be—sailin' on the water, jest as nateral as life. When I spoke of the goose, Richard and Car'line laughed, and said I “mustn't call it a goose, it laid out to be a swan!”

I said “I didn't care what it laid out to be, it was a beautiful bird, anyway, and jest as nateral as life, as I said afore.”

Serinth Ann done the picter herself, and she never took a lesson in paintin' in her life. Richard said how it would be money throwed away if she should, which was a high compliment, wa'n't it?

Speakin' of picters, Car'line told me that Richard's folks had got one picter in their house that cost a thousand dollars. And I said it was a

wicked, shameful waste of money. I declare! If anybody but Car'line had told me sech a story I wouldn't 'a' believed 'em! I didn't s'pose there was a picter in the world that cost so much money! Why! you can git a good *farm*, good medder land, right here in Punkinville, for a thousand dollars, and as for picters, we find plenty of 'em all round us for nothin—live picters, as it were!

There's one I see every pleasant summer mornin', from my back door! I wish I could describe it, but I can't, nor begin tew. There lay the smooth, green medders, with the pretty crooked brooks windin' through 'em, and on both sides, to the right and left, the pastur' lands, where the cattle feed so peaceful and contented. Then, away off in the distance, the sollum-lookin' mount'in's, with the shadders creep, creepin' 'round 'em or restin' on their tops, while like's not, all the time the sun shines bright and pleasant down below in the valley.

It's an awful harnsome picter, painted by God himself, and I'd like to see the thousand dollar ile paintin' that could hold a candle to it!

But there! I hain't mentioned the most important present, and the one that pleased Richard and Car'line the most.

Car'line's Aunt Betsey Hawkins give her a rag carpit! Yes, she cut the rags and wove it herself. She had an old-fashioned loom, sech as they used to weave rag carpits on, and years ago,

she done a thrivin' business at it. Folks from fur and near brought their rags, all cut and sewed in strips, and wound in great balls, and she wove 'em into carpitin', at so much a yard.

Even in late years she has wove a good many; folks like 'em, they are so warm and wear so well.

The one she give Car'line was a beauty, and anybody'd say so; I don't care if they're New York folks, or Boston folks, or any other kind of folks! It was made of soft colors, drab and brown mostly, with a little narrer stripe of yeller runnin' through it. Richard said it was wonderful how Aunt Betsey could make it so harnsome out o' nothin' but rags, and he praised it till she felt as proud as a peacock. She was over seventy year old, and was gittin' a little childish, you know.

Mis' Deacon Plummer she give 'em a great tub of her best June butter. Said how she'd heard that in New York they had to eat olymargyreen and the Old Harry 'n all for butter—anything, in p'int o' fact, but good, honest butter—and she couldn't bear the thought of Car'line's eatin' the pizen stuff.

Richard told her he guessed the safest way would be, for him to make a trade with her to supply 'em with butter the year round, and 'cordin'ly they struck a bargain on the spot; and an outragious stiff price it was he agreed to pay her, too. But I was glad on't, and hoped, now,

Mis' Plummer would have a little money to spend. Her husband ain't poor, but he's tight as the bark to a tree, and she never has a cent to call her own. That's why she had to give Car'line butter for a weddin' present, and I don't believe her husband would 'a' let her give that, if he'd known anything about it.

Wall, I hain't mentioned half the things, of course, there was sech a stack on 'em, and when they was packed to send to their home in New York, Richard said to Car'line, "What's the use of cartin' all this ere calamity out to New York? We can't do nothin' with it there, 'less we burn it up! Why not leave it here with your Mar—stack it away up in the garret or somewheres?"

But Car'line felt different about it, and she couldn't bear to have him speak so. She looked at him with the tears in her pretty eyes, and says she, tremelous, but decided: "No, indeed! Richard! We must take 'em all along. I wouldn't make one of the Punkinville folks feel bad, for the hull of New York! Oh, they must go, somehow!"

When he see how she felt about it, he didn't say no more. La! he'd take out Punkinville meetin'-house and set it down in their parlor, if he thought it would please her! I wonder if he'll alwers be so fond o' Car'line!

I went home with 'em for a few days, to help 'em git settled down and so on. I s'pose their house was pretty much like other houses all

around it, but it 'peared to me like a great palace. I never see nothin' equil tew it. Some things was awful queer and curi's; for instance, instid of doors they had heavy velvit curt'ins, as thick as a board—*portyairs*, they called 'em—and there wa'n't a stove in the house except in the kitchen; the heat was all manufactured somehow in the sullen, and distriberted round in some mysterious way, I dunno' how. But the house was kep' as warm as summer, the year round, even in the coldest days, they said.

In Car'line's room, beside of the bed where they slep', was five little white buttons set into the wall, and if Car'line ('fore she was up—layin' in her bed—mind ye) put her finger on No. 1, it rung a bell in the servants' room, and routed them up; if she touched No. 2, it lit the gas over her dressin' table, and made her room as light as day; No. 3 called up the servant-man, the *butler*, they called him, and so on. Car'line said it was done by 'lectricity, but it did beat all, anyway.

I told her they'd "git so's to run everything by some kind o' magic, bimeby; then all we shall have to dew will be to laze in our beds, and once in a while touch a button in the wall, if we want anything!"

We went through the rooms together, and Car'line admired everything, and thanked Richard for thinkin' of every least little thing for her comfort, as he had done; and he seemed more than satisfied, because she was.

But when we had been the rounds, Car'line slipped away, and Richard missed her, and begun to fuss. (He can't bear to have her out of his sight a minute.) "Where in the world do you s'pose she's gone?" says he, and we both started back up-stairs to find her.

When we come to the store-room, where the trunks and things was that we'd brought from Punkinville, there set Car'line on the great roll of rag carpetin', and she was cryin' as if her heart would break.

Richard flung himself down 'side of her, and took her in his arms as he would a baby.

"Why! Car'line!" says he, "cryin'? and on our very fust evenin' at home—what *is* the matter?" says he.

Then she told him, betwixt sobbin' and laughin', that it was on account of the rag carpit and the rest of the things the Punkinville folks had given her.

"And I see as plain as you do," says Car'line, "that they ain't noways sootable to put in sight in this house. But I love 'em—yes, I love 'em every one!" gittin' more hystericky every minute, and I can't and won't tuck 'em away in the garret, for the rats to eat up—*I say I won't!*

"Jest think," she goes on, the tears streamin' down her face—"jest think, how will all the dear old friends feel—Aunt Betsey, and dear, dear Aunt Sarah, and Deacon Laton's wife, and all the kind old neighbors, that have known and loved

me, and been good to me, ever sence I was born—that loved my mother, that mourn for her still—how will they feel, I say, when they come to see us, and find we don't consider their presents fit to be seen! Not one of 'em is really beautiful or artistick, I'm afraid, and some is dretful; but, Richard, they must be honored in this house!"

She lifted her head a minute like a stately lily in a storm, then took to sobbin' and cryin' ag'in.

It made Richard jest about crazy to see her so.

"Have 'em exactly as you want 'em, and where you want 'em, darlin'," he said. "Put the ragcarpit in the parlor if you want it and the ile abominations and all the rest of 'em! Why, Carline! what do *I* care, if you are only happy!" says he.

But she only cried the more.

"You are good, so good," she said, dismal, "but I don't feel as if *I* could bear to see 'em always in our rooms—*sech* bad taste—they'd look so—so *incongreuous*," says she, "they'd—they'd drive me crazy!"

"Oh-h? they would?" says Richard, laughin' in spite of himself.

"You know they would!" sobbed Carline, pettishly, "and I don't see how you can be willin' to have 'em!"

Then Richard was in a quanderry and no mistake! "It is all a terrible muddle, ain't it?" says he, and he set there quite a while in speakless misery, holdin' her little hands and lookin'

into her pretty downcasted face, and tryin' to think of some way out on't.

All of a sudden he jumped up and begun to tare round the room like a wild Injin.

"Hooray! hooray! I've got an idee!" he hollers, dancin' up and down before Car'line. "Cheer up! cheer up, Car'line, right off! You know the unfurnished room, the—the *children's* room, that is to be, sometime, dear?" says he, kissin' Car'line's blushin' cheeks, "wall, what's to hender our riggin' that up for a kind of old-fashioned spare-room?"

"Put down the rag carpit, and lay the drawed-in rugs around on it, hang up the picters and ile-paintin's, spread the risin'-sun quilt on the bed, et settery, et settery—scatter all the rest of the presents kinder promis'cus, you know, and there you have it! and what's more, you'll have a good-lookin' room as well as an interestin' one, for as everything will harmonize it can't be inartistick," says he.

"Then when our Punkinville friends comes to see us, they'll occerpy it, and feel honored and happy in dewin' so!"

Car'line was delighted. "It will be lovely!" she said, clappin' her hands. "Richard! you are a genius! You have helped me out of the wust dilemmy I ever got into!"

They couldn't set about the job at once, for there was some few pieces of furnitoor they'd got to send to Punkinville for, in order to carry out

the plan complete. In a week's time they arrove. An old mahogany bedstid, a little spindle-legged table, and a chist of drawers with brass trimmin's and claw feet; all of 'em was Car'line's gran'-mar's, and her mar's after her.

Wall, when they got that room done, it was a success, and no mistake! It was Punkinville *biled down*, as you might say, for, as Richard said, no one room in Punkinville ever begun to contain so many treasures and works of art!

In front of the great winder that looked out on to the city street, was the little spindle-legged light stand, as graceful and airy a little table as I 'bout ever see, and layin' on it was Car'line's mar's hymn-book and Testament. The little rockin'-chair she used ter set in, stood close beside on't, and Car'line told me private, that she reckoned that when she got tired of her velvit carpits and marble statooary, of her grand company and all the city dewin's—she reckoned it would be a great comfort to shet herself up in that room, and set down in her mar's little rocker, and read a verse or too out of the old Bible or hymn-book, and then think or pray a spell, or, mebbly, fall off into dreamin' of the sweet and dear old days, when she was a simple little country girl.

Not that Car'line expected to be really home-sick or unhappy! No, indeed! how could she, with the best husband in the world, and every identicle thing that heart could wish!—but she

expected to keep her old feelin's and her old simplicity, and she wouldn't be Car'line if she didn't.

Wall, they christened the old-fashioned room

"Aunt Betsey's Bowdoor,"

and it went by that name ever after.

As luck would have it, Aunt Betsey made 'em a visit pretty soon and was the fust one to sleep in it, so she dedicated it, as you might say. Come bedtime, Car'line went up with her to her room and she see the name on the door, in beautiful illoominated letters :

"Aunt Betsey's Bowdoor,"

and when she went inside, and see her rag carpit on the floor, and all the homey things around her, she wiped her eyes, and smiled as pleased as could be, and says she to Car'line :

"Lawful sakes ! Car'line, I should feel to home in this 'ere room if it was in Africy ! But what a pity to put all your prettiest things in the company room ! I should think you'd want 'em where you could enjoy 'em yourself ! But I alwers knowed you was the most onselfish creatur in the world !"

And Car'line blushed and smiled, feelin' a little guilty, but pretty well satisfied after all.

CHAPTER VIII.

THEY WRESTLE WITH SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY.

Hannibal and me was settin' out on our piazzer one night after supper, as we ginerally did when there wa'n't nothin' ter hender. I was knittin' and Hannibal was readin', or had been.

It was gettin' to be darkish, but we continnered ter set, it was so cool and pleasant. Bimeby the stars begun ter come out, and the moon riz up slow and grand in the west. It was a beautiful sight, and I said so to Hannibal.

"Ain't it beautiful?" says I, and this is what he answers, dreamy like, with his eyes fixed on the moon:

"Wife, I run of a notion that them fellers is right about the moon. It looks reasonable."

"What looks reasonable, Hannibal?"

"Why, that the moon is a world like ourn, and that it's goin' ter be fitted up in grand shape for us to live in—after we die, ye know."

"Hannibal," I asks, real matter o' fack, "where'bouts in the Bible do you find that passage?"

"Oh—nowheres—that is, not *literal*, I guess,

though it is proba'ly founded on Scriptur'. It's a—a *theory*, ye know. Tells about it in this ere magazine. The feller says——"

"Don't!" I interrupts, calmly, "don't waste your breath. What difference can it make what *he* says? What means can *he* possibly have o' knowin' whuther we shall live in the moon after we're dead, or—or in Punkinville?" says I.

"In Punkinville!" snaps Hannibal, "wherever 'tis, I hope ter massy it won't be in Punkinville! I've got about enough o' Punkinville!"

"What's the matter o' Punkinville?" I asks. "Hain't we happy here? Hain't it a pretty place? Look 'round ye," says I, p'intin' with my knittin'-work, "see how harnsome the intervalles lay down there, so green and peaceful, with the great ellums wavin' above 'em! See the river windin' through! See the old meetin'-house sleepin' there in the holler, with the holy white grave-stuns glistenin' round it in the moonlight. There's your mill tew, all in good repair, restin' from her labors as everything else in natur' is, ter night."

"The old mill!" growls Hannibal, "she might as well rest all the time and done with it! The punkin-sifter business ain't good for nothin' lately—ain't wuth a row of pins—don't amount ter Hanner Cook!"

"Hannibal," says I, "don't multiply no more eperthets on to that mill! Your business will alwers have its ups and downs, but so long as

punkin pie is e't in New England, the Hawkins Punkin-Sifter'll sell, more or less."

"Less, I guess," says Hannibal.

"Wall," says I, "'lowin' the punkin-sifter business ain't so good as it was, what reason have you to s'pose it'll be any better in the moon?"

Hannibal looked at me dretful queer and foolish, and couldn't say a word, only rub his head. I garped real sleepy, and rolled up my knittin' work.

"Husband," says I, "I guess the creaturs outer the barn are beginnin' to think it's about their bed-time, don't you?"

"I shouldn't wonder if they was," he says, and got up and went off ter tend tew 'em.

"Thanks be ter massy," says I to myself, "he's headed off for the present, anyway! But I found out it was only a temporary divarsion, as you might say. Come Sunday mornin', when we was ready for meetin', he takes up his hat and gloves, and instid o' puttin' 'em on, he stands still lookin' off out the winder.

"Come, Hannibal, hurry up, it's late," says I. "The bell is most done ringin'."

"Ruth Ann," says he, "let's go to the Baptis' meetin' to-day."

If he'd struck me a blow with his cane, I declare I shouldn't 'a' been much more 'stonished!

"To the Baptis' meetin'? What for?" says I.

"Oh, I've been lookin' into some things lately,

and I don't feel altergether sure we're on the right track. It's well enough to hear and consider all sides, anyways."

"Hannibal," says I, "I hain't a word to say ag'inst the Baptis' nor any other meetin', but as for the '*track*,' I reckon it don't amount to shucks which one we're on; they all lead to the same place. But after we know a way and have got used tew it, I reckon it's best to keep it; not go exploratin' and whiffin' round from one ter t'other."

Hannibal set down detarmined then, and says he:

"I ain't a-goin' a step to *no meetin'* this mornin'. Ruth Ann, there's a good many things layin' heavy on my mind. Let's talk."

"Hannibal Hawkins! show me your tongue this minute!" says I. "You're bilyus, that's what's the matter o' you!"

"Bilyus!" says he, indignant. "I ain't, more'n you be, not a mite!" But he put out his tongue and it did look bad, jest as I expected, and I made up my mind he should take a liver pill, large size, that very night, and if necessary I'd get out that ere "*regiment*." There's nothin' like nippin' these symptims in the bud.

But he insisted on havin' a talk, and so I took off my things and set down beside on him.

"Now, speak out," says I, "free your mind, and you'll feel better, though I think the pill is all you really need."

"Oh, Ruth Ann!" Hannibal bursts out, "I tell

ye it's my mind and not my liver that's 'fected! I've been readin' and thinkin' a good deal lately—you know business has been slack—and I've 'bout come to the conclusion that we don't *really* know anything—that is, not much—for sartin. I begin ter wonder whuther no we Congregationers are right—that is, in all respecks. And I dunno 's the Baptis' nor Methodis' nor 'Piscopals be nuther. No more I don't see how the Univar-salers can be. But I s'pose *some* on 'em must be right. They might *all* be right, seein' there's plenty o' Scriptur' ter support 'em, only that they don't any two on 'em agree." And he scowled and rubbed his head, awful perplexed. "Sometimes I'm even most tempted to think that *Scriptur'* ain't right—as it were——"

"That'll dew, Mr. Hawkins," says I, dignified and commandin' as you please. "When we begin to find fault with the Bible, it's time to stop or—or dew somethin'."

"Wall, ain't I a-tryin' to dew somethin'?" says he, with a kind of a grin.

"Hannibal," says I, "we might as well stop this argerin' before we begin. We sha'n't come to nothin'. What's the 'casion on't, anyway! It's jest here; because the punkin-sifter business is dull you've occerpied yourself findin' fault with the mill, the meetin'-houses, the Bible, and your Maker. What's the 'casion on't? Ain't God, and the meetin'-houses, and the Bible, and the catechism, and the creed jest the same's they've al-

wers been ever sence you can remember? Has anything happened to them to change 'em?"

"Why, no, I dunno's there has," says he, "that is, not up here in Punkinville. But we hear about great dewin's in the cities, down country. They say there's churches in Boston that don't pertend to believe the Bible—not even the minister don't, you know—and a good many Orthodoxes preach that there's goin' to be a chance to git religion after death! They're goin' to give the heathin' a chance too—everybody, Ruth Ann! And between you 'n me, Ruth Ann" (lookin' over his shoulder, as if he's afraid the minister might be somewhere round), "between you 'n me, I'm blarsted if I don't like this idee! It looks grand and liberal, some way!" flourishin' his arms wide apart as if takin' in all creation. "But," he continners, dejected like, "*I* can't find hide nor hair o' no sech doctrines in the Bible; I wish I could! There seems to be most everything else," and he stops ag'in and rubs his head.

Now, I'd thought of all these things long ago, and had settled 'em by givin' up beat, and I knew where I couldn't make no headway, it wa'n't any use for Hannibal to start in. More, too, I was afraid it might hurt his brains and make him a drivellin' ijiot, he's so odd, anyway, you know; so I wa'n't goin' to encourage him in it.

"Hannibal," says I, "what's the use o' tormentin' ourselves about these things, hey?"

"Why, I dunno's it's any actewal use," says

he, kinder took aback. "But there seems to be a good deal o' controvarsy goin' on jest now down country, as I said, in—in Andover and Boston, ye know."

"Wall, what if there is!" says I, matter-o'-fact. "Them places is a good ways off. There ain't no controvarsy in Punkinville, and 'tain't likely there ever will be in our day!"

"Punkinville's a hundred years behind the times!" says Hannibal, real spiteful.

"As fur as opportunities for findin' out God and livin' nigh to Him is consarned, Punkinville is equil to Andover and Boston, any day," says I. "Hain't we got the Bible same's they have, writ in the same language? Then we've got natur', everywheres and continewal. The Bible and natur' is God's own books, and in some respecks natur' is easier understood and plainer spoken of the two. There ain't so much theology about her, perhaps, so much chance for wranglin' and discussin', but there's comfort and religion. Listen to her teachin', Hannibal; open your heart to her soothin' influence, and she will dew you good." I took hold of his hand and led him out on to the door-stun, and there we stood for some minutes lookin' and listenin' in silence.

Mebby you know what a pleasant Sunday mornin' in the country is like? As we stood there we couldn't hear a single sound of men's week-day work or dewin's—scarce any sound at all, even the birds was still. But bimeby, while

we waited, I felt as if we was spoke to out of all that silence, distinck and audible, and I says to Hannibal:

"I wonder if the same word comes to you? what is it?"

And he answers slow and sollum, with his eyes on mine:

"It says 'Peace!'" Then he squeezed my hand, and I squeezed his'n back, and says I:

"Now, Hannibal, let me ask you, carm and candid, what does this 'ere bangin' o' the Bible in meetin'-houses, and wranglin' over creeds and doctrines amount tew, any way, if they fail to git *Peace* in their souls?"

And Hannibal answers, emphatic:

"Nothin', Ruth Ann. It don't amount to nothin'." Then I rejoiced, for I felt that he was on the high road to recovery; and he was, but he hadn't got there yet; he wa'n't satisfied. After settin' still a spell, he begins ag'in, kinder sheepish:

"Ruth Ann, I guess it's well enough for us to let theology alone, but it can't dew no hurt to dip inter science a little, hey? What do you think o' this 'ere Everlution business we read so much about? If it really did take God thousands o' years to make the world instid o' six days time, as we've been brought up to believe, it's funny, ain't it?"

Now, I ruther favored the opinion o' science in regard to the creation of the world, for it alwers

looked to me like a pretty big week's work, though I don't doubt the Creator's power to dew the job in even less time if He'd been a min' ter, and I says so now to Hannibal. "But why should he a' felt in a hurry?" says I. "He had plenty o' time. It wa'n't as if men and beasts was a sufferin' for the comforts of a home, and a place to stay o' nights. No, for there wa'n't any men nor beasts. God showed His wisdom and care in makin' the world fust and its inhabitants afterward."

"Why, yes," says Hannibal, grinnin'; "though if He'd made 'em fust what could he 'a done with 'em—jest s'pos'n, ye know. Why, 'tain't a s'posable case! What could He 'a done with 'em!"

"Stood 'em up ag'inst the fence—let 'em wait, of course," says I, "or—oh, a good many ways!" I wa'n't a-goin' to have Hannibal questionin' the power of the Almighty, and so I didn't give him any chance. I goes on:

"Some think the words 'six days' means six thousand years, or a long period of time. Words ain't as they used to be in them ancient tongues."

"No, I s'pose not," says Hannibal; "but, Ruth Ann, can it be that men was—*was monkeys once?* Can it be!"

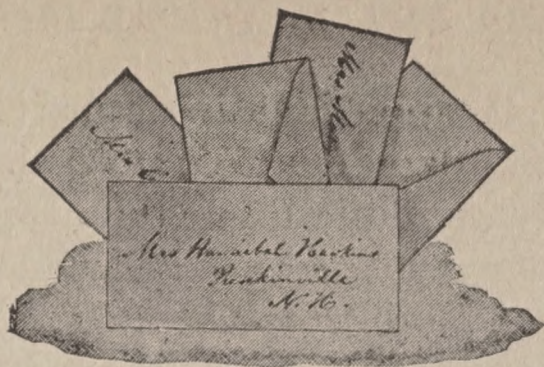
"Sometimes I think it can," says I, "but the Bible don't throw much light on the subjeck."

"It don't open its head about it, nowhere—not a word, as I can find," says Hannibal.

"Wall, if it don't, I reckon it's because it don't

make no difference to us anyway," says I, garpin', awful indifferent. "But, Hannibal, what do you want for your lunch this noon? What say to some fresh-biled eggs 'long with the cold chicken? I hear the old white hen cacklin' now; let's go'n git the eggs."





CHAPTER IX.

MRS. GRIBBIN'S "AT HOME." — THE OMISSION OF THE MISTER.

Punkinville was a dretful fashnerble place for a country town. There was some o' the folks that had relations in big cities, and so picked up a good many idees and notions about fashion and society, and they was silly enough to want to try and foller soot in Punkinville. Consequently, pretty soon after Hannibal and me got home from our bridle toor, Mis' Jotham Gribbin, one o' the most promernent women in town, give out that she was goin' to have a party, and in a few days our invitations to it come along.

This is what it said on the envelope :

"Mis' Hannibal Hawkins,"

and inside was a little square card with her name,

"Mis' Jotham Gribbin,"

in the middle, and down in the left-hand corner :

"At Home. 3 to 6 P.M. April 4, 18—."

That was all, every identicle word!

I read it and passed it to Hannibal.

He looked at the envelope and turned it over 'n over, and says he: "Hm! *Mis'* Hannibal Hawkins!"

I looked at it ag'in, and sure enough, it did read jest *Mis'* Hannibal Hawkins.

"I guess, she must 'a forgot to put on the Mister," says I; "or 'less she made a mistake."

"A curi's mistake to make, and we jest married," says Hannibal, kinder grumpy; "I'm a good min' to not go a step!"

"Oh, now, husband! how foolish!" says I; "she's naterally got a good deal on her mind—and besides '*Major and Mis' Hannibal Hawkins*' is a long mess to write. I don't believe she could git it all on this 'ere little envelope, if she tried; not in one line, anyway."

"Let her kiver the pesky little thing all over, then! She'd orter took a bigger one in the fust place!" snaps Hannibal.

Then he read the card out loud:

"'At Home.' What do you make o' that, Ruth Ann?" says he, lookin' wild. "Ain't folks ginerally to home when they give a party? Where in nater should they be? Nobody 'd think o' goin' to Africy or the Sandwidge Islands to find 'em, would they? Everybody knows where the Gribbinses live, if they know anything! 'At Home!'" he repeats, contemptewous, "and see here! I'll be hanged if they hain't told us jest

when to go and how long to stay! 'From 3 to 6 P.M.' We're expected to leave at 6 o'clock precisely, I s'pose! Wall! I must say, Ruth Ann, it ain't much like the good old-fashioned hospitality we've been 'customed to. We've ginerally been expected to go when we got ready, and stay as long as we could—till mornin', if we was a min'ter, 'specially if there was dancin'."

I had to confess that it didn't seem very corjul. She might at least 'a said somethin' about "the pleasure of our comp'ny," it couldn't 'a done no hurt, and we should 'a felt better; and besides, if we hadn't heard aforehand that she was goin' to give a party, we shouldn't 'a know'd what under the sun she meant by her '*At Home*.'"

"I conclude there ain't goin' to be no dancin'," says I; "the time is fixed so short, and seein' it's in the day-time too."

"I wonder if they'll have anything to eat? Bread 'n water'd go good with their skimpy invite," says Hannibal, sarcastic.

"Wall, we'll go and see, then we shall know all about it," says I, "and I shouldn't wonder if we had a real good time after all."

Of course I was dyin' to find out what other folks thought of the invitations, and what kind of a party they thought it was goin' to be, and so on. You see, bein' a new-comer, I didn't feel like runnin' in intimit to the neighbors' houses yet, as I used to at home. But I wa'n't kep' long in the dark, for the very next mornin', our nighest

neighbor, Mis' Ezry Hackett, come drivin' in 'fore we got our breakfast out the way, and she was chuckin' full and bilin' over with the subject. She said how "them invitations might be stylish, she persumed they was, all-killin' stylish, seein' Mis' Gribbin's daughter had been visitin' in Boston all winter, but 'cordin' to her way o' thinkin' they wa'n't corjul, nor they wa'n't civil!"

I spoke about the omission of the "mister" on our'n, and she said their'n was jest the same, and all the rest she'd heard on, "and I dew say," says she, "that it leaves the men in a terrible awkward fix! It may be a mistake," says she, "but I should sooner think it's Boston fashion. You know how strong-minded them 'ere Boston women be, and mebbly that's one o' their women's right's ways of ignorin' and puttin' down the men. But I must say it is goin' a *leetle* too fur. Men-folks is naterally sensitive, anyway," says she, "and I s'pose Major Hawkins feels it oncommon, bein' jest married, and so." She said she s'posed the easiest way to find out about the hull thing would be to go to Mis' Gribbin herself, frank and candid, and inquire; "but," says she, "Mis' Gribbin is so mighty big feelin' and airy that there ain't a woman in Punkinville that would be willin' to yumor her so much. No, we must go right ahead, as if we knew all about 'At Homes,' and went to 'em every day in the week." She said if she found out anything more she'd run in and tell

me. That very afternoon, in she come, all of a fluster.

“What do you think now?” says she, “Mis’ Gribbin’s niece told Mis’ Deacon Laton, and Mis’ Deacon Laton told me, that they wa’n’t agoin’ to take off their things at all to that party! That the proper way for us to dew is to wear our bunnits, and keep ’em on! Did you ever! And *she* says we ain’t expected to stop no time at all—jest go in one door and pass out t’other, same’s they do at funerals, you know! That’s what *she* said. But afterward I see Mis’ Barber, and she told me that her Mariar met Serinthy Ann Gribbin down to the post-office yesterday, and in the course o’ the conversation she let on that they was goin’ to have refreshments—cake and coffy—and now, if they be, they’ve got to give us time to eat ’em, hain’t they? ’less we put ’em in our pockets to carry home! And ’tain’t likely they expect us to *eat with our bunnits on*, is it? I shouldn’t wonder if the deacon’s wife misunderstood, she’s kinder hard o’ hearin’ anyway.”

I’d been thinkin’ the matter over carm and candid, and when Mis’ Hackett got done, I says :

“Mis’ Hackett, let other folks dew as they’re a min’ to about this ’ere party; lets you ’n me use our common senses. Common sense is better’n Boston ettykett, or any other kind of ettykett,” says I. “Now, it says on this card, which is calkerlated to be an invite to a party” (here Mis’

Hackett smiled sarcastic), "it says 'from 3 to 6,' don't it?"

"Ondoubtedly it does read thus and so," says Mis' Hackett.

"Wall," I continners, "I don't see how we can be fur out of the way if we're there punctewal at 3 o'clock, and leave at 6 o'clock sharp. It seems to me that would be strickly 'cordin' to the terms of the invite, if not 'cordin' to ettykett. Hey?" says I.

"Yes, yes, I think so, sartin," answers Mis' Hackett. "That percession business must 'a been all a mistake. Mis' Gribbin wouldn't have the face to ask us to leave our work and take the trouble of dressin' up jest to go over there and pass in one door and out o' t'other. Of course not, 'tain't reasonable," says she.

The next day was Sunday, and everybody was out to meetin', and I'm afeared there was more thinkin' about Mis' Gribbin's "*At Home*" than there was about the sermon. But Parson Alden, dear old soul, seein' us all so much more wide awake than usual, preached oncommon lively and arnest, and I heard him remark to Deacon Laton, goin' out o' meetin', that he did "have faith to believe that Punkinville was on the threshold of a powerful revival, for never in his durin' experience had he preached to a more interesteder and wide-awake congregation than what he had that day."

I felt 'shamed and conscience-smit enough, and

I made up my mind on the spot that the dear old man shouldn't never have no more cause to complain of me nor my folks for not keepin' awake, if there was any vartue in cayann pepper losengers and hunchin's. (I'm dretful apt to drowze in meetin' myself, and Hannibal ginerally 'lows to put in half an hour's good sound sleep durin' sermon time.)

When we got home, Hannibal told me how the men-folks had talked over the matter of the invitations, out in the horse-sheds at noon-time, and had 'p'inted a meetin' at John Russell's house for a Monday night, to take a vote whuther no they should resent the omission o' the Mister as an insult, or jest stay to home and mind nothin' about it, or go, or what? And every man had agreed to think the matter over thurrer between whiles, and be perpared to vote 'cordin'ly.

I thought that was a very good way to settle it, and I felt pretty sure the majority would vote to go.

And they did. But some of 'em that lived quite a ways out of the village grumbled a good deal at the early hour set for the party to begin; said they "didn't think much of leavin' their work right in the middle o' the day, as it were, and riggin' up and startin' out to a party. Why couldn't Mis' Gribbin have her'n in the evenin', as other folks did?"

Hannibal and me, bein' jest married, was pretty well on't for clo'es, of course, and we

reckoned what was good enough to wear on our bridle toor in New York City was good enough for Punkinville, so we was all right; but some was consider'ble exercised and put out. Don't you know, some folks never have anything to wear, no matter what the time or 'casion is. Did you ever notice it?

The party was set for Wednesday night, and Wednesday mornin' Mis' Hacket run over in a great ter dew, and said that Ezry (that's her husband) had been down to the store, to git him a new pair o' pantaloons to go 'long with his best soot, and he found the store full of men, all after clo'es—pants, vests, or coats, or somethin'—and she said how that Mr. Morse, the storekeeper, was most crazy, for he hadn't but jest two soots in the store, and them wouldn't fit nobody; and Mr. Morse said if he had knowed in time, he could 'a' sent to the city and laid in a stock jest as well as not, and fitted 'em all out in shape. He didn't feel any wuss'n the men did, you better believe. But, you see, we had all been so took up with the omission o' the Mister, that we hadn't thought o' clo'es.

"Let 'em wear their meetin' clo'es," says I to Miss' Hackett; "what looks well enough to wear ter meetin' orter look well enough for a party."

"I know it," says she; "ginerally speakin', it orter, but I guess likely a good many is jest in Ezry's fix; kinder 'between hay and grass,' and

thinkin' their old clo'es would dew till cold weather, they've got pretty shabby. I notice men ain't apt to buy new clo'es till the edge o' winter or so."

Wall, they all had to do the best they could, I s'pose. Mis' Jinks she cut off the legs of her husband's pants and turned 'em 'round hind side afore, and sewed 'em on ag'in; so the patches on the knees would come in the holler of his legs, where they wouldn't show; and Mis' Hackett she inked the seams of Ezry's pants, and pressed out the knees, and turned in the edges round the bottom where they was frayed out. But she got 'em dretful short; they did look redickerlous! I couldn't help noticin' 'em at the party. And there was a number o' men with their'n the same way. I asked Hannibal afterward, if they couldn't 'a' let down their galluses or somethin', but he laughed, and said there wa'n't ginerally much help for "*high water pants*." (That's what he called 'em.)

There wa'n't nothin' the matter with Hannibal's clo'es any way. He made a noble 'pearance, if I dew say it, and I feel to believe that I looked reasonable well myself.

Wall, Hannibal and me got ready, and stopped on the way for Mis' Hackett and Ezry, so's to go 'long with them. We rung Mis' Gribbin's door-bell jest as the clock was strikin' three.

"We're punctewal, anyway," I whispers to Hannibal, "and punctewality is a vartue, I don't

care whuther it's in Punkinville or Boston," says I.

Serinthy Ann Gribbin come to the door, and spoke to us very perlite, but I thought she 'peared kinder strange, someway. She says,

"Walk right in, ladies," then she turns to the men, hesitatin' and flustered:

"Er—er—will *you* come in too, gentlemen?" she says.

They did come in, of course, follerin' along behind us, and lookin' sheepish.

Instdid o' askin' us to go upstairs and lay off our things, she opened the parlor door and took us right in there. Speakin' up quite loud, and bearin on to the word *Mister* oncommon heavy, she sings out:

"*Mister* and Mis' Hawkins, *Mister* and Mis' Hackett!"

Her mar come for'ard and shook hands with us, lookin' queer at the men, same's Serinthy Ann had, and I begun to be morilly sartin, if not dead sure, that we'd made an onmitergated mistake in fetchin' 'em along, but I detarmined to make the best on't, and I hoped the rest would do the same.

When Mis' Gribbin shook hands with Mis' Hackett, Mis' Hackett laughed, and says, kinder off-hand and familiar, as one neighbor to another, you know:

"Your mar and me don't need to be interduced, Serinthy; we was brought up girls ter-

gether, right here in Punkinville, wa'n't we, Mis' Gribbin?"

But la! Mis' Gribbin' didn't even smile; she jest nodded her head imperceptible and horthy, as much as to say: "No liberties, no triflin', this is a momentuous occasion, and I'm a good deal more'n momentuous myself!"

But she says to me, quite condescendin' and corjul:

"I am glad ter welcome you to our circle, Mis' Hawkins," says she; and thinks I to myself, so an "At Home" is a circle of some kind, but as I didn't see no sewin' layin' round, I concluded it wa'n't a common sewin' circle.

Wall, the folks poured in and poured in, and all the women brought their husbands, same's we did.

"Mercy!" says Mis' Hackett to me, "where did the Gribbinses expect to put all these folks? Much as ever the meetin' house would hold 'em. There must be a mistake somewheres, or else awful poor calkerlation.

I suspicioned that there was considerable of both, but I didn't say so.

They kep' comin' for about half an hour, till the parlor and settin'-room was full and runnin' over. Then they begun to stow 'em away in the dinin'-room and kitchen. In p'int o' fact, there wa'n't no comfort nowheres from the beginnin'; nothin' but crowdin' and squeezin' and pushin', and everybody was buzzin' about the omission o' the

Mister, and speckerlatin' as to whuther the men was expected to come.

It didn't take the women long to see through the hull business, but men-folks are awful num' about some things, you know, and this time, perhaps, it was jest as well they was.

As I said, it was terrible crowded and hot—oh, pipin' hot! All the women ontied their bunnit strings and fanned themselves with their handkerchi'fs, and the men took off fust their coats, and finally their vests, and carried 'em on their arms.

Hannibal got the idee that there was more room out in the kitchen, so he put me behind him, and tellin' me to keep close, he fit his way through. But when we got there we didn't seem to be much better off. There wa'n't no place to set down, and the stove was red-hot, but we managed to open a winder and shet up the stove, then took turns settin' in the wood-box, which was better'n nothin'; but as Hannibal remarked, there wa'n't "much *party* to it; we could set in the wood-box to home."

Hannibal perceeded at once to interduce me to all the folks in the kitchen, and for the fust time we engaged in a little somethin' like conversation.

After they'd all asked me separate, how I liked Punkinville, they fell back onto the subjeck of the party, and one little woman says, laughin':

"If this ere's the kind of parties they have in

Boston, I pity 'em! For goodness' sake, let's do somethin'—chewin' gum would be better'n nothin', wouldn't it?"

So sayin' she took a great big paper of spruce gum out of her pocket, and passed it round, and in a few minutes we was all busy chewin' and talkin' away real sociable. Gum is sociable anyway, don't you think so?

But Hannibal said it wa'n't "fillin'," and it made him feel hungry, so he begun to fuss about goin' home.

"Oh, no, you mustn't go home yet," they all says, "we shall have refreshments bimeby."

It was my turn settin' in the wood-box, and jest then I heard voices outside in what 'peared to be the shed behind me. The wood-box stood close to the shed door, I took it, and I heard Mis' Gribbin say distinctly:

"What did the 'tarnal fools come for, anyway, when they wa'n't invited? Did they 'spose our house would hold the hull town o' Punkinville?"

Then Mister Gribbin answers, and says he:

"But now they're here, they've got to stay. It wouldn't never dew to mad 'em jest 'fore 'lection. You can see that as well as I can, if you ain't a gump and a fool!"

She grumbled out somethin' I didn't hear, then she says:

"Wall, s'pos'n they stay, who's a goin' to feed 'em? I hain't got cake and coffy enough for this crowd to *smell on*," says she, sarcastic.

"Leave me to manage that," says he; then he says somethin' 'bout his *new barn* (he was buildin' a barn at the time).

Not long after—say half an hour or so, Mister Gribbin 'peared in the parlor, and rappin' on the seraphim, sung out:

"Attention, ladies and gentlemen, attention!"

Then, when we was all still, he bows right and left, awful limber-jinted and graceful, and thus addresses us:

"Ladies and gentlemen—that is—neighbors—er—citizens o' Punkinville! I was—was hend-ered from gittin' home to the party before, on 'count of—business, pressin' business. Consequentially our plans for the 'commodation and entertainment of our guests and guestesses hain't been strickly carried out—not up to this p'int—but you're *all here*," bowin' and rubbin' his hands and smilin', "yes, you're *all here*, and now, hopin' it ain't too late, I take pleasure in perceedin' to carry out my—that is to say—*our* plans. Gentlemen, feller-townsmen and neighbors, will you walk out to *my new barn*? Mis' Gribbin will tend to the ladies. Come on, gentlemen, this way! You all know the way!"

Oh, how they did skedaddle! Almost before the words was out of his mouth they started, heels over head, without sayin' boo to their wives, or stoppin' to put on their coats and vests,

so that in a dretful few minutes we women-folks was left in the house by ourselves.

Mis' Gribbin and Serinthy Ann was now different bein's. They invited us to make ourselves perfeckly to home, and we done so, and bimeby they brought in cake and coffy, and we e't and chatted and had sech a pleasant time that when the clock struck six we couldn't hardly believe it was so late. Mis' Hackett and me we meant to be punctewal to go as well as to come, so we was ready to start, but our men-folks didn't put in their 'pearance.

We waited some little time, and then I sergested to Mis' Hackett that we go over and see the new barn and so git our pardners. 'Cordin'ly we took our leaves of Mis' Gribbin and Serinthy Ann, and went over.

When we opened the big barn door, what a sight we see! . . . Wall, to cut a long story short as possible, Mister Gribbin had pervided imprompty refreshments out there for the men, consistin' of what odds and eends he could pick up at the store acrost the street; sardeens, crackers and cheese, nuts and raisins, and I dunno what all, *to eat*, and *somethin' ter drink*, besides; I can't tell you jest what, but that it was of an intosticatin' nater I felt sartin' the minute I set eyes on Hannibal!

When Hannibal see me, he got up off'n the nail-kag he was settin' on, and come rollin' towards me.

“New barn! fine new barn, Ruth Ann!” says he, wavin’ his arms in all directions like a win’ mill, “fine new barn—and we’re all goin’ to vote for Gribbin in November—every man on us, ’publicans and—and sinners! Hooray!” says he.

I stood there a minute, leanin’ up ag’in’ the door and takin’ in the seen. There they was, all in a similar condition to what Hannibal was, if not more than similar, and they was shakin’



hands with one ’n’ ’other, and blowin’, and pledgin’ themselves for Gribbin.

“We’ll vote for Gribbin! Good feller—treated us like gen’lemen!” they says, and so on and so forth.

Yes, Mister Gribbin had managed to turn our blunder to his own advantage, and I hadn’t a doubt but he’d be ’lected come November by an

overpowerin' majority! And, thinks I to myself, "I dunno but he desarves it, for he's done remarkable well (barrin' the objectionable nater of the drink he pervided).

I 'sisted Hannibal to put on his coat and vest, and Mis' Hackett hunted up Ezry and done the same by him, then we locked arms with 'em, respective, and went home. ✕

CHAPTER X.

HANNIBAL'S LITERARY FURY.

You remember the "Regimunt" that Doctor Bonder and me got up for Hannibal that time when he had, or thought he had, the dyspepsy? Wall, it wa'n't more'n a month after Car'line was married that he had another queer spell entirely different from that one. He didn't seem ter complain of no bad feelin's nowheres, didn't mention his tongue nor liver, and e't and slep' as well as usual, fur's I could see. His principal symptim 'peared to be absent-mindedness—went 'round all the time in a kinder brown study, as you might say.

I watched him and waited for quite a while, hopin' he'd come out of it all right without resortin' to the "Regimunt;" but bimeby I begun to be really scairt, and one forenoon (it was a Tuesday, I remember, and I was ironin') I made up my mind somethin' had got to be done to once.

That mornin' I speak on, he left off his work (in the middle o' the forenoon, mind ye) and come loppin' along inter the kitchen and threw himself down in the great rocker, leanin' back, and there

he set 'pearently mediatin', for all the world, as if there wa'n't nothin' else ter dew.

I left my ironin' and went over to him and laid my hand on to his shoulder.

"Now, Hannibal Hawkins," says I, quiet, but firm as Monadnock, "tell me this instant what is the matter of you? Be you sick? Have I got to go'n git out that ere 'Regimunt'?"

"No, you hain't!" he snaps, rousin' up, terrible wide-awake; "I ain't sick—hain't thought o' bein'. Can't a man have no—no aspire-ations—no ——"

"*No what?*" says I, very severe. I was afeared but his mind was wanderin'.

"No aspire-ations, no ambitions," he repeats, as bold as you please. "You don't understand me anyway, and never will," he continnered, lookin' abused like.

I must 'a' blushed at this accusation o' his'n, for it was the truth and I knew it. I didn't understand him. He was alwers takin' me onawares on one tack or another; but I didn't see as it was my fault.

"Mebby it's so," says I, meek as Moses; "but I never was married to a man before, and hain't had much experience with 'em."

"Seems 's if you might profit more by your privileges now," he grumbled. "It's nice and comfortable for a man like me to be threatened with a 'Regimunt' of pills and shower-baths every time he looks crossways or gits an idee into his head—nice, ain't it?" says he, sarcastic.

"Hannibal," says I, "have you really got an idee?" Then, with a little coaxin', he went on to explain how that ever sence we visited in Bohemy and see all them edicated and literary folks, and heard 'em talk books and writin', he'd had longin's and aspire-ations to dew somethin' of the kind himself, and how that finally he'd made up his mind that he *must* write a story, or he shouldn't never be satisfied and contented.

Of course, I was all took down to once. I knew he was alwers dewin' the onexpected, as it were, but if he'd told me he'd murdered a man and hid him under my bed I shouldn't felt a mite more surprised, and I s'pose I shewed it in my face, for he seemed mad and stuffy like at the way I took it.

"I dunno why you sh'd be so terrible thunder-struck," says he. "What is there so tarnation on-likely in the idee of me writin' a story, hey? *You* can write bags o' poitry, but the minute *I* undertake ter write a *story* you set down on it!"

"Who's set down on anythin'?" says I, rallyin' up with all my might 'n main. "Naterally, my fust thought was that story writin' wa'n't exactly in your line of business—the punkin-sifter business, you know," says I. "But if you're in 'arnest about it, go ahead, and good luck to you; nobody'll be prouder of ye than what I shall," says I.

Now, what could be more encouragin'? But Hannibal seemed fur from satisfied.

"Yes, ye-as," says he, rubbin' his head, and squirmin' 'round in his chair awful oneasy, "yes; but, er—er—how in nater shall I begin? What shall I call the—the story?"

"Why, that would depend a good deal on what it's goin' to be about?" says I.

"'Twouldn't, nuther!" says he. "I want a takin' title, anyway—the title's half. Somethin' like 'Jinks'es Baby,' or so, you know."

"But hain't you no subject in view?" I asks. "Ginrally, when folks write stories, they have some idees weighin' heavy on their minds."

"N—o, I dunno's I've got any—that is, none in partick'lar," says he.

I went back to my ironin' to once.

"Then my advice is that you give it all up and go about your legitermit business—the punkin-sifter business," says I.

"And I say I won't!" he answers, terrible spunky. "I'm goin' to write a story, and you're goin' to help me, 'n that's all there is tew it!"

Wall, the upshot on't was that we put our heads together and set about it, for, though I didn't actewally 'prove on't, I wa'n't goin' to have Hannibal say that his wife didn't encourage him in his undertakin's.

We concluded to let the title go 'till after the story was writ.

"Who wants to name a child 'fore it's borned," says Hannibal, and I thought it was a sensible remark.

"Now, mind ye," he continners, "there ain't goin' to be no nonsense 'bout this ere story—no fayries, nor gots, nor sicolergy, nor—nor religion; it's goin' ter be a common-sense story—all killin' common-sense—now, I tell ye," says he, bangin' the table with his fist.

"All right," says I, and I got some paper and a pencil, and set down, and begun ter bite the end o' the pencil and think.

"Wall," says I, "where shall we have her live?"

"*Her?* Who?" says Hannibal, lookin' wild.

"Why, the girl—our heroine."

"Oh! would you have her a girl? I dunno——"

"Of course," says I; "what can you say that's interestin' about a man?"

"But this is goin' to be *common-sense*, you know," he argered. But finally he give in.

"Let her be a girl, I don't care; only she must be a smart girl, and a likely girl, or I won't have nothin' ter dew with her," says he.

I won't undertake to tell jest what parts Hannibal made up, or what he didn't; we writ it in comp'ny, and I guess like enough half the fun to the reader will be in guessin' who writ what.

This is the story:

Elizy Jane Muggins was the handsomest girl in Ticonderogy. She had blue eyes and gold-colored hair, and a good sound set o' teeth in her head,



ELIZY JANE MUGGINS.

and a figger that didn't need no C. P. corsets to fetch it inter shape.

She wore clean calico gowns every day, and alerpacer to meetin'; and she could comb her hair and git ready to go to meetin' in five minutes by the clock, and look the best of any girl there, too.

She sung in the quire and led the treble. She had a beautiful voice and could read notes as fast as she could sing 'em.

A young man, the son of a millionair in New York City, was workin' at Square Noddledemains the summer that our story opens. His name was J. A. Henery Vanderhopper, and he was workin' out, because he was desirous of 'airnin' the money to buy him a "Safety;" he wa'n't obliged to work for a "*livin'*," of course.

He was a magnificent specimen of a man, Henery was, six feet in his stockin's if he was an inch, and broad in perportion. He had an eye like a hawk, and—and everything to match. (Hannibal said this.) And he was smart to work; there wa'n't a lazy bone in his body. He sung in the quire tew, headed the tenor, so he and Elizy Jane happened to set side by side on Sundays, used the same hym'-book and e't peppermints out of the same paper bag.

Now if these ere two young folks ain't as likely and interestin' a two as anybody could ask, I'd like to know where you'd find 'em. (I told Hannibal he'd better not say that; better leave the readers

to judge for themselves; but he said there was a good chance to "clench their interest," and he was goin' to do it.)

Wall, as a nateral consequence, 'fore long, bein' throwed into society together, they fell dead in love with one'n 'nother. The fust they knew mebbby they'd be singin' away for all they was wuth a Sunday mornin', some sech hymn as "Welcome, delightful Day," or, "Oh, where shall rest be found?" and all to once they'd happen to glance into one'n 'nother's eyes, and then they'd color up, and their voices would tremble so's't old Bijah Wilkins, the fust bass, would notice and turn to look at 'em over his great blue goggles. (Bijah had weak eyes, you know, and wore goggles all the time.)

Here Hannibal stopped me short.

"Ruth Ann," says he, "the way we're headin,' we're workin' it into a reg'lar *love story* and nothin' else! And didn't I tell you I was goin' to have it common-sense?"

"But you can't have a story about two young folks without any love in it! What in the world be you a-thinkin' of?" says I.

"I *will* have a story without any love in it, or 'less I won't have none at all!" says he; "and now you jest go back and scratch out all that nonsense, and we'll see what next."

"But, Hannibal," says I, "it can't be done! We've fetched them two young folks together, and

now we've *got* to let 'em fall in love! What else can they dew that's wuth tellin' to the readin' public?"

Hannibal set thinkin' and scowlin' awful 'arnest for some time; but finally he fetched his fist down on the table with a thump, and says he:

"I *won't let 'em fall in love*. I'll—I'll *kill 'em fust!*"

"But the mischief was done in the beginnin'," says I, "when we let 'em set in the quire together, and eat peppermints out of the same bag. They've fell in love a' ready."

"What! so quick!" says Hannibal, lookin' disgusted enough.

"Ondoubtedly," I answers, carmlly.

"Then I won't have nothin' more to dew with 'em!" says Hannibal, gettin' excited, "the silly gumps! Can't they set in the same meetin'-house without fallin' in love with one'n 'nother?"

"Not if they was made for one'n 'nother, Hannibal," says I. "No, I s'pose it would be contr'y to nater."

I set waitin' with pencil suspended in mid-air. "Wall, what next?" says I.

"Nothin'!" snaps Hannibal, jumpin' up out of the rocker, and givin' it a savage kick, "we'll write a *bear* story when we write any. But I tell you what, Ruth Ann, it ain't a good thing for a man to step one side from his legittermitt business." (Didn't I say so to begin with?)

"Don't never ask me to write any more stories!"

(*I ask him !*) “Makin’ punkin sifters is the best business for me !” says he, and I didn’t dispute him.

But, all the same, I’ve got interested in them two young folks, and I sha’n’t rest easy till somebody takes hold and finishes up the story we commenced, and tells how they came out.



CHAPTER XI.

COUSIN POLLY'S VISIT. — SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA IN TIME OF A BOOM.—THE BED-LOUNGE.—THE COT-BED, ETC.

About this time Cousin Polly Parker made us a visit. Her home was at Darby Corner, but when I was married she was way out in Californy, and so couldn't be at the weddin'. In p'int o' fact, I hadn't seen her for a number o' years, and a good deal had happened meanwhiles. I had changed my state o' single blessedness for one of matrimony, and she had travelled six thousand mil'ds or more (ain't it?) to Californy and back.

She was there in the time of a big real estate boom, and what she told me about it was so interestin' that I feel as if I wanted everybody else to hear and know.

I thought it was queer, her goin' so, solitary and alone, and I says to her the fust thing :

"Polly," says I, "do tell us what started you up to go way off out there—to the eends o' the airth, as you might say?"

"Wall," Polly answers, "I had worked pretty

stiddy at my trade for a good many year (she was a tailoress by trade), and after mother died there wa'n't nothin' bindin' ter keep me, and money wa'n't much object—you know I'd got to be consider'ble forehanded for Darby Corner, and didn't really need to work for a livin' any longer. But I shouldn't never thought of sech a thing as pullin' up stakes and goin' to Californy, if it hadn't been for 'Mandy Hammond, she that was 'Mandy Plimpton.

You see, me and 'Mandy was old friends and schoolmates, and alwers set everything by one 'n 'nother, and ever after she went out to Californy and got married and settled down, she didn't give me no peace. 'Cordin' to her tell, she and her husband was makin' money hand over fist, and nothin' to dew, but I must come out and try my luck.

She kep' writin' and writin', till, finally, I made up my mind I'd go out and visit her and look round, anyway.

This was when the great boom in Southern Californy was at its height, and thinkin' I might want to invest my money there, I sold the old place so's to git all I could, took out what I had in the bank, and started, bag and baggage.

After bein' nine mortal days on the road, I 'rived in the city of Los Angeles, and thankful enough I was, you'd better believe!"

"Excuse me, Polly, for interruptin'," says I at this p'int, "but I wish you'd jest pernounce that

word agin. I hear it called every which way, and should be glad to know what they call it out there."

"I dunno," says Polly, "I couldn't never settle on to no way in partick'lar. I heard it called all ways: "Los Angylis and Los Angylees, Los Anglis and Los Angloss—I s'pose there is a correck way, and if words have any feelin's or senserbilities, how that 'ere poor word must squirm and suffer, to be so mauled and mangled!

Wall, when I 'rived in that city—whatever you call it—I found I'd got to stay there all night, couldn't git no further till next day, so, tired as I was, I had to go'n hunt up a lodgin'.

I didn't want to spend my money payin' big prices to a hotel—reckoned I'd ruther keep it to invest in real estate, ye know. I had a good deal of diffikilty in findin' a cheap lodgin', but did at last strike one for 25 cents. And by the way, they call 25 cents *two bits* in Californy, I dunno why, 'less it is to show their contemp' of money. We think a quarter of a dollar is quite a sum of money, don't we?

The lodgin' I found was a little ways out in the subbubs of the city, and it was *in a water tank*! It was a round-shaped structer about as big as a small house, and they'd fixed up sleepin' places in it to rent, the city was so full of folks.

Of course, I didn't sleep in where the water was, and they promised me faithful, that they wouldn't turn it on in the night, and wet me

down—and they didn't. I had a good night's sleep and came out all right in the mornin'. I found they lodged folks most anyhow and anywhere, in Californy, them days. Some said they even rented their door-steps, and door-nobs, but I guess that wa'n't exackly so.

The next day I took the cars and went on to where 'Mandy and her husband lived. Lordsburg sartinly wa'n't much of a place to look at then, but it was boomin' way up, and all the citzens everdently expected they'd live to see it a big city, and to see themselves all millionaires and millionairesses.

It was in the month o' November that I got there, and what I see was a great, arid, barren plain, kivered with sand—no, with dirt, powdered dirt—and standin' round on all sides of this appearent desert was a double row of mountains, tremenjous big ones the back row was, and the front ones (foot-hills they called 'em) was smaller.

I'd heard a good deal 'bout the Californy hills; but, as I wrote home to the Darby Corner folks, 'tain't much use a tryin' to describe 'em; you've jest got to see 'em for yourselves in order to 'preciate and understand. Nothin' whatever growed on 'em, as fur as I could see; not a single tree nor spear o' grass—not even a huckleberry bush! They was as bare and bald as—as the top o' Major Hawkineses head! But I found they could look beautiful, all the same. It was wonderful the different colors they would take on, and seemin'ly no

two times alike! 'Mandy said how their changin' colors so was owin' "to the atmosferic effecks" on to 'em, but I told her I guessed natur' had as much to do with it as anything.

"I was dretful homesick for a while after I got to 'Mandy's. Everything was so different, and I missed everything and everybody that I'd been used to in Vermont. And oh! how I hated the dust and dirt, and the shif'less Californy ways!

Finally one day I had a good cryin' spell, and told 'Mandy jest how I felt, and said right out that I "wished ter massy I hadn't a come!" 'Mandy didn't say much of anything at the time, but 'long in the afternoon she hitched up the horse and asked me if I didn't wanter go a buggy ridin'; that's what they call it out there.

Wall, she took me through a great vineyard, of I don't know how many acres, where there was grapes enough growin' to supply the hull State o' Vermont, and she give me all I could eat—*sech* grapes they was! Then we drove through the vineyard, a quarter of a mil'd or so in length, where the road was bordered on both sides with the harnsomet roses and geraniums I ever see! She filled my lap with flowers, and we started home by way of the foot-hills.

I thought I'd seen them mountains look all ways, but it did seem as if a miracle of beauty was bein' performed onto 'em, that night, for my special benefit! It was jest sunset, and at

fust the hull range of hills, big and little ahead on us, seemed flamin' in fire and blood! Then gradewally, this terrible red changed to the softest kind of pinky gray, and in a few minutes it begun to creep, creep in a cloudy haze, all down around everything, till the mystery and the glory on't fell on us ridin' along in the buggy!

I never shall forgit how it 'fected me to my dyin' day! I dunno what it was, it might 'a' been nothin' in the world but "atmosferic effectks." I don't care, it was beautiful anyway, and soft and winnin', and somehow I felt jest as if me and Californy had kissed one'n 'nother and made friends, and I've loved her ever sence!

But as I have said, things is very different in Californy from what they are here in New England. My land! I guess they be! To begin with, in New England there seems to be alwers plenty o' room *in the house*, but in Californy what room there is, is mostly out doors.

In the last letter I got from 'Mandy before I started, she writ how that they had jest built 'em a bran new house, and should be all settled down into it by the time I come. But picter my surprise, when I got there and found out they hadn't got no spare chamber in that new house!

There was jest four rooms down-stairs, and none up-stairs—in p'int o' fact, there wa'n't any *stairs*! There was a kitchen, dinin'-room, settin'-room, and one bed-room, where 'Mandy and her husband slep', and that was all—every single

room! And when I see how it was, thinks I to myself, "Oh massy sakes! where be I a-goin' to sleep? Only one bed for three on us!" thinks I.

You know, Ruth Ann, I'd come fur, and fagged through with a good deal, sence I left home, and was completely tuckered out, and I'd been lottin' on a good night's rest when I got to 'Mandy's, but now there didn't seem to be much show for it.

More'n all, I felt mortified to think I'd come in upon 'em, sitiwated as they was—seein' they hadn't got their up-stairs part built yet—and so bimeby, when it come along nigh bed-time, I takes 'Mandy one side and says to her, real delerkit,

"'Mandy," says I, "as long's the spare chamber *ain't quite finished*, I dew hope you'll feel free to put me most anywheres. I ain't at all par-tick'lar," says I, though I thought to myself it would make plaguy little difference if I was, so fur's the bed-room was consarned.

But 'Mandy wa'n't ruffled a mite; she smiled as carm as a clock, and says she, "Don't you worry, Polly, *I've got a bed-lounge!*" "Oh!" says I, "I wanter know?" for, Ruth Ann, I never see sech a thing in my life before, though I find they're common enough in the cities here to home, but in Californy they're univarsal, as you might say. Wall, 'Mandy called my 'tention to her sofy, jest a common sofy, I took it to be, but by performin' some kind of mechanikle operations on to it—lettin' down somethin', and pushin' in and pullin' out somethin' else, sure enough, there it was, as

harnsome a bed as I ever set eyes on tew, and big enough to 'commodate a middlin'-sized family! I was dumfounded!

"This 'ere is a spare chamber in a nut-shell, ain't it?" says I, and it was complete, no mistake!

Wall, I slep' on that ere contrivance all the time I was to 'Mandy's house, and I must say, I consider the bed-lounge one of Californy's choicest institutions. Yes, and the foldin'-bed and the cabinet bed, too; they're all excellent subterfuges for the geniwine bedstid that takes up more room than most folks have to spare—in *the house*—as I said, there's plenty o' room *out-doors*.

Sence I've begun on this subjeck of beds, I may as well finish it, I guess. It took me some time to git acquainted with 'em all. After I'd staid to 'Mandy's house a couple o' weeks and got nicely rested, I felt inclined to start out and see the country. 'Mandy had an uncle down in San Diego, so she said, she'd go there with me and make a little visit. It was two hundred mil'ds or more from Lordsburg, but la! they don't think anything of goin that fur out there. San Diego is, next to Los Angeles, the biggest city of Southern Californy, and it was boomin' way up—but I'll tell you more about the boom some other time.

That fust night after we got to Uncle Williams's, we was all settin' in the parlor. It was a master harnsome room, with lace curt'ins and portyairs, and a good many fixin's I didn't pertend to know the names on. But I thought the orgin, or the

seraphim, as we called 'em up home, was an on-common, nice-lookin' one, and as I said, we was settin' there, and bimeby when the conversation kinder flagged down, I looked toward the seraphim and says:

"Won't somebody play?"

"Play?" says Uncle William; "play what?"

"Why play on the instrument—the seraphim, or whatever you call it," says I, p'intin' to it.

Oh! how Uncle William laughed, and how they all laughed! Then Uncle William went and opened that piece o' furnitoor and showed me a nice bed—matrass, pillars, and all, and says he:

"There, Polly! there's your seraphim turned into what we call a foldin' or cabinet-bed!"

I was beat! "I declare ter man!" says I to Uncle William, "you Californy folks can make a bed out of most anything, can't you?" But after that I didn't dare to give any strange piece of furnitoor a name till I'd slep' in the room with it, at least one night, and found out for'sartin it wa'n't no kind of a bed!

There's one more bed that I got some 'quainted with in San Diego; that is the cot-bed. As nigh as I can make out, this 'ere bed is calkerlated to take the place of the old-fashioned trundle-bed. You know, Ruth Ann, how when we was children, they used to put us intew it, and kiver us up all but our little heads, and then run it way in under the big four-poster, where the growed-up folks

slep'. It was a pretty good bed for children, I guess, and so is the cot-bed; but it don't 'pear to be jest adapted to a full-growed, full-sized individual—that is, not without piecin', ye know. For either your head or your feet has got ter hang off, and by the time you find out which you'd ruther let hang, it is mornin'. Then, besides, I've noticed that bed-clo'es is dretful apt to be slippery—don't seem to be much place to tuck 'em in, on a cot-bed, either—and folks hain't got into the way of puttin' buttons and button-holes on to their bed-clo'es yet, though they will, in time, I guess; and when they dew that, and piece it out a foot or two at one eend, the cot-bed of Californy will be able to hold up its head with the bed-lounge and the cabinet-bed."

I couldn't help laughin'. "La, now, Polly," says I, "how you dew set things out! Of course it seems queer to us New Englanders, to see so much contrivin' to save room in a house, but I dunno' but what we're jest as queer in goin' to the other extreme. When we build a house, we 'low always for at least two rooms mor'n we want; that is, for two that we know will be shet up nine-tenths of the year. These rooms is, viz., namely, the parlor and the spare chamber.

The parlor is ginerally sitiwated on the north side of the house, and we don't run it in the winter, 'less there's a funeral or a weddin', but in the summer time, if we are expectin' company, we go in and roll up the curt'ins, brush down the spider-

webs out of the corners, dust off the sofy and chairs, see that the family Bible, the album, and the poetry books is laid square on to the centre table, that the infant Samuel and all the other ornyments on the mantletry shelf is shiny—then, when the company comes, we take 'em and shut 'em up in there alone (perhaps with the album or the poetry books to look at), and we go off into the kitchen to git supper. Now ain't that so? I don't say that you or I do it, or that everybody does, but ain't it a common thing in New England country towns?

Wall, the other room, the spare chamber, is on the north side of the house too, up-stairs, right over the parlor, and in the summer time, if the winders has been opened for a week or ten days, to air and dry it out, and if a body don't mind sleepin' on a feather bed, and if framed coffin-plates and picters of death-bed scenes don't 'fect our spirits, we're all right, fur's I know, and stand a chance of gittin' a fair night's rest; but how is it in the winter? Polly Parker! you know as well 's I dew, that rheumatiz and cramps and newraligy lurks in that damp feather-bed and in them damp sheets and blankits! You know it would be fur safer to set up all night on the wood-box beside o' the kitchen stove, than to resk your life and health in that spare bed!

There ain't no better folks in the world than New England country folks, but in the name of humanity, I do say, we orter put our spare cham-

bers on the south side of the house, and have somebody sleep in 'em once in a while the year round, in order to keep 'em fit for use when the company comes!

That's what I said, and Polly agreed with me.

CHAPTER XII.

POLLY AND THE REAL ESTATE AGENT.

What astonished me more'n anything else in Californy, was the innumerable number of real estate offices, 'specially in San Diego.

"Why, massy sakes!" says I to Uncle William (he was 'Mandy's uncle, he wa'n't mine, but everybody called him uncle), "massy sakes!" says I, "they're thicker'n the beer saloons in Chicago, ain't they? But how in the world do they all manage to live?"

And he answers: "Live? Off their commissions, of course."

"Commissions on what?" I asks.

"Why, on the land they sell," says Uncle William, laughin'.

"But it don't seem as if there could be land enough—not in all Californy—when it's divided up 'mongst 'em, to give 'em all a livin'! There's sech an *everlastin' raft* of 'em! I feel anxious about 'em," says I; "they'll git the land all sold dretful quick, and then what'll they dew? They'll hafter go to the poor farm, fur's I know."

"Anybody'd know you was from New England,"

says Uncle William; "your idees is sech, and you're so easy scairt. I want you to understand that this 'ere is a middlin' large-sized country, and there's considerable land in Californy to handle."

Then he showed me the map, and called my 'tention to the bigness of Californy, and I ob-sarved that quite a number of New Englands could be 'commodated comfortable inside of her, and 'cordin'ly I begun to change my tune as fur the other way.

"Oh, dear me," says I, "what a big country! what a 'mazin' big country! they won't git it all sold 'fore the millenium, if they dew then!"

"Yes, they will," says Uncle William; "I tell you the Californy real estate agents is *rustlers*!"

"Hey? Is what?" says I.

"Is *rustlers*," says he, "don't let the grass grow under their feet, you know."

"Oh!" says I, "I noticed there wa'n't much of any grass in Californy—keep it wore down pretty close, do they?"

"Yes," says Uncle William ag'in, "they're terrible rustlers, these real estate men be," and I found out that was so, sure enough.

The very next day after my conversation with Uncle William, as I was goin' along on Fifth Street, I happened to stop before one of them 'ere real estate blackboards, and while I was readin', careless, not thinkin' much about what I was dewin', an agent come to the door, smilin'

awful friendly, and p'intin' to his blackboard, he says,

"Madam, there's some bonny fidy barg'ins, and no mistake!"

"Is that so?" says I. "Wall, I ain't thinkin' of buyin' to-day; hain't read half the blackboards yet—jest lookin' round, ye know."

"All right," says he, smilin' good-natered, "but won't you come in? Me'n my pardner will be glad to give you all the information we can."

He was a master nice lookin', friendly 'pearin' man, and I took tew him to once. I kinder suspicioned he might be goin' to "rustle" some, but I didn't care if he did. All the rustlin' in the world couldn't make me buy, if I didn't see fit tew; so I answers:

"I'm 'bleeged to ye, and I guess I will come in a little while."

They showed me their maps and diergrams, with all the city property and its additions and substractions, marked out on 'em, beautiful and plain as day.

After I'd looked a spell, I told 'em how I'd sold out my property in Darby Corner, and how I might possibly invest in San Diego—eventewally, if not before. But I told 'em I wanted a barg'in, a bonny fidy barg'in; nothin' less would satisfy me.

Wall, they was all wide awake and on their "*kee veev*" in a minute, and begun to rustle now in arnest.

“What kind of a lot have you got in mind?” says Mister Jones, the one that invited me in.

“Oh, a nice corner lot,” I told him; “one with plenty of parks and boolyvards and institootions of learnin’, and orange groves and vineyards under a high state of cultivation tew it—oh, yes! and horse-cars runnin’ past the door.”

I told ’em I wa’n’t partick’lar in other respecks, but these few p’intss I must insist ontew—oh! and one thing more, it must be handy to the post-office (for I happened to think I’d got the job o’ gittin’ my letters out o’ that buildin’—no light undertakin’ in time of a boom, I tell you).

In reply to this, the agents said how some folks was onreasonable and wanted the airth, but they guessed there wouldn’t be no diffikilty in sootin’ me, and Mister Jones asked me on the spot if he should have the pleasure of takin’ me out buggy-ridin’ the next mornin’ to look at some extry nice property.

I thanked him and told him I was agreeable, then I made ’em a kerchey apiece and went away.

Wall, that agent come after me, bright and early. He had a nice kerridge and a spankin’ pair o’ horses, with shiny harnesses on ’em, and he helped me in, and tucked the kivers ’round me as perlite as you please.

I hain’t a word o’ fault to find with Mister Jones’s treatment of me that day. No young man takin’ his best girl out buggy-ridin’ ever waited on her harnsomer’n what he did on me. Why!

he was more than perlite, he was confidin', for bimeby, when we'd got along a piece, he told me how he was a widderer, and all alone in the cold world, and said he injoyed dretful poor health on 'count o' the catarr', and when he took out his pocket-hank'chif and wiped his eyes, I declare! Ruth Ann, I was almost 'fected myself. I should 'a' been quite, if I hadn't happened to think of Bijah Coolidge jest then, and the sacred claims he had on to me, as it were.

But I never let on 'bout Bijah to Mister Jones. I drawed down my face, and sighed heavy, and looked at him out of the corners of my eyes. I was jest thinkin' what else I could do without actewally encouragin' him, when he asks,

"Miss Parker, don't you find the care of your property a great and overwhelmin' burden?"

"Oh, dear me suz! I guess I dew!" says I, though I couldn't help addin' to myself that I'd manage to lug it somehow, if it was consider'ble bigger!

He couldn't 'a' looked more sympathizin', if I'd had the price o' the hull of Darby Corner in my pockit; but he didn't say no more till we come to the hill where the property that he wanted to show me was sitiuated.

Then he turned the kerridge round, so's we could git a good view, and says he,

"Now, if it is a residence you want, here is the place! High ground, splendid view, good

air, and plenty o' room! Look around you, Miss Parker!" wavin' his hand.

I looked where he waved. There lay the city, stretched out before us, and I must say it was a beautiful sight!

Whatever else is wrong in San Diego, there can't never be nothin' the matter with her nateral sitiuation, now I tell you! I don't care whuther it's boomin', or jest common every-day time!

In the language of somebody, I dunno who, "There she lays, like a goddess, with her head on the hills, smilin' up into the sky, dippin' her rosy toes in the waters of the bay, and extendin' her fair young arms in welcome to all the world!"

Yes, San Diego looked dretful nice down there, but it struck me as bein' pretty fur off.

"How many mil'ds do you call it we've come?" says I.

"By the road, which is dretful crooked and windy, I s'pose it's 'bout eight mil'ds," says he.

"And what is the price of these 'ere lots?"

"A thousand dollars apiece," says he, "and dirt cheap at that!"

For the sake o' sayin' somethin', I remarked:

"Wouldn't it be ruther fur for the children to walk to school and to meetin'?"

"Bless your heart!" he answers, "the school-house, and the meetin'-house, too, will git up here long enough before the children will, I ventur'!"

"Wall, it's too dear, anyway," says I; "ain't

there some cheaper lots in the neighborhood—as it were ? ”

“ Oh, yes, plenty ! ” says he ; and we rode down, down, into an awful deep holler, so deep and shet in, that I couldn’t think of nothin’ but the crater to a volcaner, that I’d seen pictered once in a book. And sech a time as we had gittin’ there, plungin’ and pitchin’. I expected nothin’ but the horses would break their necks and our’n too, before we got onto level ground.

When we finally stopped, he p’inted out the lots, all staked and numbered, and referrin’ to his map, said I could have one o’ the best for six hundred dollars.

I looked around me. I couldn’t see nothin’, absolutely nothin’, but the sky overhead, and a wall of land all round us.

“ This ’ere is a wonderful freak o’ natur’, ain’t it ? ” says I to Mister Jones. “ I don’t mind comin’ down here once, though it’s a dretful resk, but I should feel better if I had a balloon to ride out in, shouldn’t you ? ”

He suspicioned I was makin’ fun on him, and he straightened up, stiff as a major, and says he :

“ Miss Parker, I sollumly believe that in less than a year these lots will be occerpied, and cable cars will run from here to the heart of the city ! ”

“ I wanter know, ” says I, real serious, “ but don’t you think a balloon would be safer ? ”

“ Then you don’t fancy these lots ? ” says he, mournful.

"Why, no; I believe I'd ruther live 'bove ground till I'm dead," says I. "And on the hull, I dunno but I'd better invest my money in farmin' land, somethin' sootable for orange groves or vineyards."

To tell the truth, Ruth Ann, the more I see of the boom, and of the land they was sellin' at sech outrageous prices, the more I felt that there was a good deal of humbug about it, and I made up my mind that I shouldn't invest my hard-earned money in no sech property, not in time of a boom, anyway.

But I was willin' to look at it, and to ride 'round over the country in the enjoyment of Mister Jones's company.

Thinks I to myself, "I don't git a ride every day, and behind sech a pair of horses as these 'ere."

So I told him I guessed I'd like some farmin' land, thinkin' pretty likely he'd offer to take me out into the country, where I hadn't never been, and was longin' to go.

I says, "I run of a notion that I should like a vineyard of grapes out in some valley, where I could build a house, and so come and live every winter. Anyway," says I, "I mean to see all kinds before I buy—how do I know what I want?"

"All right," says Mister Jones, tryin' ter speak cheerful, though I could see he was disapp'inted to think I wasn't sooted yit; "all right, to-morrow

I'll take you out to see the best track of vineyard land that's ever been put on the markit."

I forgit the name of that place, but it begun with an "El" or "La," and ended queer and poetical. Names is very different in Californy from what they be in the East, and they orter be. How would it seem to call San Diego, *Boston*, for instance? I can't bear to think on't.

Some say a rose, by any other name, would be jest as sweet, but I don't believe it. Think of callin' a rose a *pickle*, Ruth Ann! 'Tain't reasonable nor 'propriate—of course 'tain't! I tell ye, there's a good deal o' heft in a name!

Wall, they got up an excursion to go to this new place, and they formed a kind of a percession, with a band o' music to play to us, and lead the way.

Mister Jones and I went with the same team we had the day before, and a charmin' ride we had, too. When we got there, they give us a lunch of sandwidges and coffy, which was fust-rate and plenty of 'em; then they was ready to show us 'round.

I wish I could describe that place to you, Ruth Ann! It lay down low and peaceful in a valley, and the sun shone in on to it dretful soft and warm.

The air was sweet and spicy with the smell of the yeller voilits and the wild southern wood, or boys' love, growin' everywheres. For it was 'long

in Feberwary, and that is spring in Southern Californy, you know.

The medder larks was singin' as if they couldn't possibly hold in no longer, and everything seemed as fresh and bright as if it had jest been made; or, at any-rate, as if it had jest waked up in the mornin', as good as new.

I found out there was an innumerable number of sech places in Californy, layin' jest as God made 'em. No plow nor harrer had ever perfaned their virgin sile, nor disturbed the kyoties and rabbits, and medder larks, that live in harmony and occerpy the land tergether, without stakes or boundry lines of any sort, and with no idee of the boolywards, the vineyards and parks and corner lots of the futur', harntin' even their dreams.

I declare! it makes a person feel like Adam 'n Eve, or, at any rate, like Christofer Columbus, to set foot for the fust time in sech a spot!

While we was eatin' our lunch, the band played—in fact, it played most all the time—and it played well, too. But jest before the sale of the lots begun, it did seem as if them musicianers was bent on overdewin'. Every one on 'em played jest as tight as he could put in. I didn't see but the little horns made as much noise as the big ones, every mite and grain, and how they did pound on to the drums!

Ain't it curi's that whenever folks want'er inspire their feller-bein's, or rouse 'em up to a pitch of dewin' anything, they alwers play to 'em a while

fust on a band o' music? You know, and I know, Ruth Ann, how inspirin' it is.

Before 'lection, what an important factor the band is to all the perlitical meetin's. Seem's if they depended on it to stir up the people full as much as they do on the speakers, don't it?

And that afternoon, as true as I live, there was a p'int o' time with me, when that band was playin', that I felt my hard-airned money was in critical danger. Yes, I felt so wrought up and reckless, that I had all I could do to keep from rushin' for'ard, throwin' my wallet at Mister Jones's feet, and sayin',

"Here's my money, Mister Jones! Take it, as fur's it'll go! I only wish I had enough to buy the hull State o' Californy!"

That's the way I felt for a minute, then I seemed to hear a voice sayin',

"Hang on to your money, Polly!" and I was myself agin.

Pretty soon Mister Jones come up to me, smilin' and rubbin' his hands.

"Wall, Miss Parker," says he, "which lot is it, or, ruther, how many? Have you made up your mind?"

He had been so good to me, that I hated to blast his hopes, like pizen; but I felt as if the time had come for me to speak out (you see I hadn't the face ter go buggy-ridin' with him to look at any more property), and so I dropt down my eyes real meachin', and says I, "Mister Jones, I've decided

not to invest in Californy land, I guess it'll be better for me to keep my money where I can git hold on it when I want'er."

"Seems to me it took you a good while to find it out," growled Mister Jones, and I didn't blame him a mite. I looked at him frank and friendly, and told him so, and says I, "I want'er thank you for your kind attentions, and I'd gladly pay you a little somethin' for the wear and tear of your horses and kerridge, and the strain onto your patience—and your perliteness, tew," says I; "do let me."

Then the true sooperiority of the Californy gentleman riz up and triump'ed! He laid his hand on his heart and made me a low bow, and says he:

"Miss Parker, I wouldn't think o' takin' a cent. I consider the pleasure of your comp'ny sufficient compensation."

Ruth Ann, did you ever!

And I kerchied down to the ground, and told him that I must say he was "the best-natered, patienest, forgivineest man I ever see, and a perfeck gentleman—if he was a real estate agent!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE POST-OFFICE IN TIME OF A BOOM.

KEEP in mind, Ruth Ann, that it was in the time of a big boom that I was in Californy, and the state o' things that I see and experienced is proba'ly changed pretty thurrer by this time. I only tell what I see there then, and seem's if I couldn't realize how different everything must be sence the collapse, as you might call it.

One of the most conspicewous featur's or peculiarities of the boom was the state o' things at the post-offices, 'specially in the large cities. The fust time I went down town after I arrove in San Diego, when I got as fur as F Street (one o' the principal business streets), I see a long percession of folks, extendin' half way or so up the street, and from there clear round the corner to Sixth Street. It was a tremenjous long percession and no mistake, and seemed to be made up of folks of all kinds and sizes. There was white folks, colored folks, men and boys, women and children. They was standin' stock still jest then, and they all looked completely tuckered out, as if they had come fur, and was stoppin' to rest a while.

Some was leanin' up ag'in the side o' the buildin's, and some was settin' on the door-stun's, but whatever they done, I noticed they was alwers careful not to lose their places in the percession.

Their faces looked so awful drawed down and sollum, I naterally thinks to myself, it's a funeral percession. When I got along up to the fag eend of the line, I asked one of the men as sympathizin's I could:

"Who's dead, and what did he die on?"

He growled out somethin'—"post-office," was all I could understand.

"Oh, the pos'master is dead, is he?" says I; "must 'a' had a good many friends—or, mebby, seein' he was a public man, the hull city's turned out to dew him honor? Seem's to me I skurce ever see sech a long funeral percession! Wall, a good pos'master is a great loss to the kimmunity," says I.

When I said that, some laughed and some groaned.

"When did he die, and what ailded him?" I continners.

"Die! He ain't dead yet. No sech good news!" spoke up the man I had fust addrested.

"Oh! I wan'ter know. Mebby he's very sick—ain't expected to live, perhaps?"

Upon this the man turned to me, fair and square, and says he,

"Young woman, in order to satisfy your curiosity, let me inform you that the pos'master of

San Diego is enjoyin' his usual health, so fur as we know; all the wuss for us. *We're* the sick ones; we're sick as death, all on us, ain't we, my friends?" turnin' round and 'pealin' to the rest of the mourners, and they all groaned dismal, in answer.

I was naterally glad to hear that the pos'master wa'n't dead, after all—wa'n't even sick; but then I begun to feel curious and anxious, too, 'bout the percession.

"Queer!" thinks I to myself, "if they're sick, what are they out here for?" And I says to the man, "If you're sick, why don't you go home and nuss yourselves up—soak your feet and take a sweat—instid of standin' out here in the cold? It looks likely to rain, too. I declare!" says I, "I hadn't no idee there was so much sickness in San Diego at the present time!"

I must 'a' 'peared real anxious, for when I said that, a nice-lookin' man stepped for'ard and lifted his hat respeckful, and says he,

"Madam, I take it you're a stranger in San Diego, and our post-office systim is unbeknown to you, perhaps?"

"It sartinly is," says I; then he went on and explained how that all this percession of men, women, and children *was waitin' for their mail matters*, and how they'd stood there already a number of hours, waitin' their turns to ask for letters at the winders, and he said the office would be shet up 'fore half on 'em got a chance. Then

they'd go home and git a little bite o' somethin' to eat, and come ag'in as quick as they could, and so they'd keep a-dewin' every mail, day in and day out, and after all, never git their letters.

"Never git their letters!" says I. "Why not? Who does git 'em if they don't?" says I.

"The Lord only knows, 'less it's the fishes in the sea! It's reported that they dump 'em in the bay, as the easiest way to dispose of 'em!" says he, gloomy.

I was dumfounded! "But I want to hear from my folks up to Darby Corner once in a while," says I. "To be sure, I hain't left no parents nor children—no reg'lar blood relations, as you might say—but there's them that I want'er hear from, that I *must* hear from!" says I to the man. (You see I was thinkin' of Bijah Coolidge. Him and me had been keepin' company for some time; but, of course, I wa'n't goin' to let on to the San Diego folks about it.)

Why, the idee of not gittin' my letters made me mad as a hop! Do you wonder at it, Ruth Ann?

"What do you hire your pos'master for, if it ain't to give you your mail matters?" says I, indignant.

"Oh, we hire him to git red on 'em as he sees fit," says the man, sarcastic and bitter.

"I'll git my letters, or I'll know the reason why!" says I, and I went away.

Wall, I called at the post-office pretty often

after that; that is, I j'ined the percession, and called, if I got a chance and in the course of my goin's and waitin's, I made a number of 'quaintances, and got so interested in some of 'em, and sympathized with 'em so in their distress about their letters, that I didn't think much nor care whuther I got any myself or not. I knew Bijah was all right; or if anything should happen, he was 'bundantly able to telegraft, so I didn't worry.

But, as I say, there was them that I felt for. There was one little woman in partik'lar that I see most every day. She was a widder woman, and seemed to be in delerkit health; but she was awful sweet and motherly lookin' and had the gentlest, softest voice I 'bout ever heard. I give her my place in the percession invariable, if I was ahead on her, so we got to be real good friends, and she told me all about herself.

She said how she had left her boy, her only son, to home in the East, and come out here alone for her health, because the doctors told her she couldn't never stan' another New England winter as she was, and a few months in Southern Californy might set her right up.

She said it was out of the question for both on 'em to come, on 'count of the expense, and at fust she didn't see how she could afford to come herself. Then, for a good while, she felt as if she couldn't come no way without Robby. (Her boy's name was Robby, you know.) But at last, considerin' that if she didn't come, she would have to

die, and so leave him for good 'n' all, and seein' his father was dead, and they two was alone tergether, and seein' that he would need her more'n more every comin' year—as boys do, when they're growin' up to manhood—seein' all this, she strained every narve, and decided to make the journey.

So she scraped up what money she could, and left him, and come out to San Diego. She said it was like pullin' eye teeth, for she and Robby hadn't never been parted before, not even for a night. But he was a manly little feller, full of grit, and when they come to say good-by, he tried to be brave enough for both on 'em. He promised her he'd write to her twice every week till she come home in the spring "his strong, well, little mammy," as he called her.

"He never shed a tear, bless him," says she, "not before me, anyway; but if it hadn't 'a' been for the hope of them letters, and of the hold I should so keep on to him, I couldn't never 'a' done it, never! My heart would 'a' broke in the partin'!" says the little woman.

Wall, it seemed when she fust got to San Diego she begun to grow strong right away, and the prospec' was that she would go home well, jest as they had hoped. One week, two weeks, three weeks went by, and then she got her fust letter from Robby. After that, though she writ faithful every Wednesday and Sunday, and knew Robby done the same 'cordin' to his promise, she didn't hear ag'in!

The poor, little woman 'tended on that post-office like a dog, usin' up all her strength in draggin' herself back'ard and for'ard. She writ to Robby to direct his letters to the house where she was stoppin', and finally, when that didn't make no difference, a kind friend left orders with the pos'master to have 'em put in her box; but still no more letters.

In the room of gainin' now, she begun to go down hill, and pretty soon she had to have a doctor.

He said nothin' in the world hendered her git-in' well, but jest pinin' for them 'ere letters.

Oh! how my heart did ache for her! But what could I or anybody dew?

At last I got desperit, and one day I went down to the post-office and rapped at the back door. When the man come, I says to him, "Mister, be you the pos'master o' San Diego?" and he draws himself up important, and answers, "I be."

"Then," says I, "I want to ask a great favor of you. I don't come to ask for my own letters—keep 'em, if you wanten, or give 'em to the fishes, for all I care; but won't you give me Mis' Mary Davises' letters from her boy, Robby? *You must!*" says I. "Why, mister pos'master, *she's dyin'* for them letters from little Robby!" and I burst out cryin', I couldn't help it.

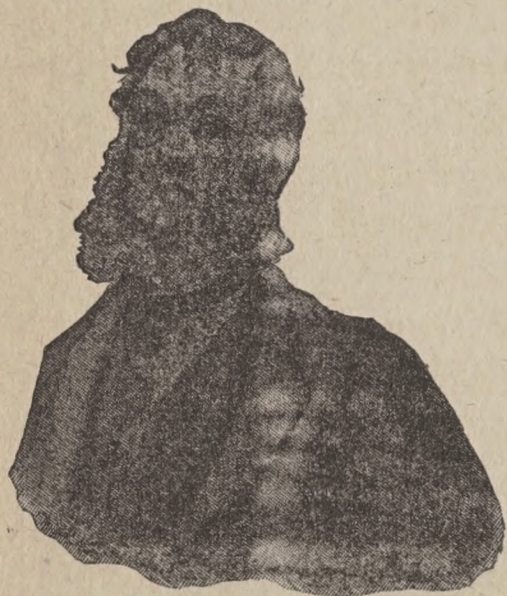
But la! he didn't care no more'n as if he'd been a stun' or a statu'.

"Round to the winder and take your turn, marm," says he, wavin' me away.

"I won't," says I; "we can't git nothin' there! nor nowhere's else, and you know it!"

He muttered somethin' 'bout "crazy lunnytick!" and shet the door in my face.

I come away feelin' as if I'd like to batter his old



doors down, and overhaul the contenks of that 'ere post-office, and find out what was there, and what wa'n't! I wondered the hull city didn't rize up and mob him, and all them lazy clerks of his'n.

When Mis' Davis had been in San Diego jest three months she took to her bed, and she never got up. Frettin' and worryin' about Robby was what done it.

We telegraphed several times, and got answer back that he was all right, but when we brought the last one, and put it in her hands, she looked at it and smiled gentle and sad, then sighed, and says she, "If it was only in Robby's hand-writin'!"

That night, kind friends watched with her—me among the rest—and toward mornin' she died, with her boy's name on her lips.

Next day the pos'master handed over to me seven letters from Robby! They'd been layin' in that post-office nobody knows how long, and now they'd come, too late!

Wall! we laid 'em on her cold bosom—little good they'd do her now—and wondered what would become of Robby!

I don't wonder you cry, Ruth Ann; I cry every time I think about that little woman and her boy! Sometimes I'm a good mind to start and go down East on purpose to hunt him up, so's to know for a sartinty how he's farin' sence his mar died.

Yes, this was a real sad eppersode, and heart breakin' enough, but it couldn't 'a' happened any time except durin' a boom, and you mustn't think that Californy folks, as a gineral thing, are like that 'ere pos'master. No, indeed! fur from it! They're the warm-heartedest, obligin'est folks I ever see! You can't help lovin' 'em if you try! I don't say *likin'*, that ain't half warm enough to express the feelin'.

And socierty, 'specially in the cities, is different from ary other place I ever got intew.

They don't seem to care a snap whuther your gran'father and gran'mother come over in the ark or in the Mayflower, or whuther you hail from Darby Corner, or from the great city of Boston!

And generous! My land sakes! they're too generous ter live! Why! San Diego is a perfect paradise for all kinds of beggars and tramps!

Even the coachmen and draymen would haul up their horses to contribit, when the hat was passed around.

In short, Ruth Ann, there wa'n't much of anything the matter of Californy, as I found it, exceptin' *the mud*, and you can't git 'round that—nor through it, nuther, 'thout loosin' off your injy-rubbers!"

CHAPTER XIV.

COUSIN POLLY'S OIL-STOVE, AND HOW IT WORKED.

They say the ile-stove is even more of a necessity in Californy than the bed-lounge, and I shouldn't wonder if it was. Rich folks live there pretty much as they dew everywheres else, and have good, old-fashioned stoves and fire-places, and plenty of 'em, but the folks that are jest me-jum well off, and have a hankerin' after corner lots, and ranches, and groves, and vineyards, out o' perportion to their means, them are the ones that build their houses without chimbleys, and rent their rooms to poor delooded women, that come out there with the idee that all they need for their comfort is plenty of fancy work.

And right here I must stop and free my mind, and remark that the average invalid goin' to Californy in search of health does act like a born fool, and no mistake! There ain't no common-sense or reason to her, it would 'pear.

She goes out there an invalid, if not sick. She has weak lungs as a gineral thing, and instid of insistin' on havin' a room well warmed and well ventilated, she stives herself away into a cold

room on the shady side of the house, and then she sets down to her paintin' of Californy poppies or pepper-sprigs, or, if she's only common artistick, to some new pattern of fancy-work borrered from a feller-boarder; and she stays there from mornin' till night, stitchin', or paintin' away, all the time with a pain in her chist or side, and gittin' chilled through to her marrer bones. Then, when her cough grows wuss, she begins to think the climitt don't agree with her! I dunno how any climitt could, under the sarcumstances.

Why! Ruth Ann! it seems almost wicked for folks to go out there and so slight the blessin's that nater pervides! I tell you there's medicine in the Californy air and sunshine, and what a woman in s'arch of health orter dew, is to spend the heft of her time out doors, or if she must stay in the house, see that she has plenty of fresh air and sun let into her room, and above all, that she keeps warm.

She may say she can't afford to ride, and she hain't able to walk, but if she's able to set and dew fancy work all day, I say she's able to walk, don't you? Or, if she can't walk fur, there's alwers the street-cars. I was 'stonished to see how many milds they'd carry you for five cents!

Why, good land! Anybody might board and live on them cars, almost! Jest take along a lunch, you know, and by managin' the transfers right, what's to hender ridin' from mornin' till

night? It would be enough sight better'n settin' shiverin', curled up in a cold room!

Speakin' of cold rooms, if nobody wouldn't hire a room without some kind of a heatin' apparatus to it, folks would be obleeged to build more chimbleys, even if they didn't buy so many corner lots and so on. It would be better for the repertation of the Californy climit, and for folkses pockits too, in the end, I guess.

But as things was, we had to dew the best we could. I persume it is different by this time, but in the time o' the boom, ye know, rooms was in sech demand in San Diego, that we couldn't git a decent one short of sixteen or eighteen dollars a month—jest one room—then there was your board, besides!

That's what I paid, and no way to warm the room at that! I had plenty of lace curt'ins and ile paintin's, plenty o' roses climbin' over my winders, and views of the shinin' bay of San Diego, but all them wa'n't warmin', and if it's cold, it's cold, whuther it's in San Diego in time of a boom, or Darby Corner, or Punkinville, where booms never come.

For a while I wropped myself up in shawls, put hot bricks to my feet, drunk ginger tea, and tried all kinds o' subterfuges, in'ards, and out'ards as you might say, but they was fur from satisfactory, and finally one of my feller boarders told me I'd hafter git an ile-stove. She said 'most everybody used 'em—even cooked on 'em, and they answered every purpose complete.

So I went down town the very next day and ordered one sent home on trial, tergether with all the et setteryys to go with it, includin' a can of ile.

I persume you never see sech ilecans as they have there, Ruth Ann! I hadn't never seen one before bigger'n a good-sized family coffy pot, holdin' a gallon or two. But the one I bought was tremenjus big, and no mistake! They hadn't no smaller ones, and the man I bought it of said it was jest common size. It looked to me oncommon large size. It looked queer, too! It was square, and reminded me of the average Californy cottage, without the door-steps to it. Unlike the Californy cottage, though, it did have a kind of a chimbley, where, I took it, the ile was to run out.

Wall, when the man brought the things, I told him to leave 'em out in the back yard, where there was plenty o' room, and I perceeded at once to reconnoiter the can for the purpose of fillin' my stove.

The spout, or chimbley I have mentioned, was sitiuated in one corner of the roof of the can, and it wa'n't any bigger round than a pipe-stem.

When I see it, I says to my friend,

"That 'ere ain't much of a spout for sech a big consarn to have tew it, is it?" But I took hold of the handle and tipped the thing over one side, as well as I could. Not an identicle drop of ile run out!

"Turn the wheel beside of the chimbley," says

my friend, and I done so, and sure enough the ile begun to run before I was really perpared for it, and it went all over my dress, and on to the ground.

I managed to ease it up a little, and took the brass kiver off'n the hole in my stove, and aimed the spout at it. I thought I aimed it pretty well, but the ile seemed to be aimed all wrong, for it went everywheres promisc'ous, and my friend says ag'in,

"I guess you'll have to fill a small can fust, then fill your stove from that."

I dropped the tin house down on to my toes, and says I, kinder mad,

"Why didn't you say so, before!" says I, "then I might 'a' saved my ile and my dress, and my disposishion, too!" says I.

She got me a small can, and I aimed my spout at that, this time, and with some better success, but found that fillin' even the small one was a work of time—I was goin' to say of etarnity—for I never knew how long I stood there supportin' of that great tin house with my knee, while the ile drizzle, drizzled into the can (what didn't go on my dress and feet!). I do know that every bone in my hull body ached like the toothache, and after a while I guess I kinder lost my consciousness, and jest stood there like a num' statu'.

But bimeby I come to, and revived up and begun to feel ruther out o' patience.

"Why don't they have a bigger spout?" says I.

"What's to hender their havin' one consider'ble bigger? Is there any law limitin' these 'ere spouts to the size of a pipe-stem, hey?" says I, wipin' the perspiration from my face with my ily pockit han'kerchif.

"Oh, that's the size they alwers be," answers my friend, matter of fact.

"I don't see as that makes it any more senser-ble!" says I, sarcastic.

Wall, when the can was a little more'n half full I thought I'd fill my stove.

"My trials is o'er, anyway, thank fortin'," says I, drawin' a long breath of relief; but it wa'n't so, no sech thing!

I lifted up the can and stiddied it on my knee, and begun to pour, but the ile didn't come wuth a cent!

"Take off the kiver to your can!" says my friend, and I done so. I follered every single one of her directions obedient, and they worked well. I must say she understood the principles that ile-can was constructed onto fust rate. I hain't got no head for sech things myself. If I was makin' an ile-can, I should make it with dretful few principles to it, and more spout and conveniences for dewin' with.

"Be keerful not to fill your stove too full, or it'll run over," was my friend's next remark, and I begun to grow anxious agin. I looked inside o' that stove, and I see it was terrible dark!

How was I a-goin' to know when it was full?

Why! if I'd been in there myself, I couldn't 'a' seen my hand before me! It was as dark as the black hole of Calcutty, every mite and grain! I begun to interrogate inter things ag'in.

"See here!" says I, "ain't there no way o' lightin' up in there—no gas, no 'lectricity? A taller candle would be better'n nothin'. Oh! if I only had one ray of light to tell me when it's full!" says I.

"Oh, I guess you'll know when it's full," answered my friend, onconsarned; and sure enough I did, for in a minute I felt a wet stream comin' on to my feet, and I jedged the stove was full!

I never was so fond of the smell o' karysene as some, and by the time I got the can and the stove cleaned up, I was most down sick.

But finally, when everything 'peared to be in runnin' order, I lit the stove, and looked at it and felt encouraged. It did look beautiful; and, what was better, it begun to feel warm.

Bein' of a generous and hospiterble turn, I naturally wanted to share with my less fortinit feller-boarders. 'Cordin'ly, I run out to invite 'em all in.

They was glad and thankful enough to come, seein' their rooms was all cold and comfortless, as it were; so they gethered up their fancy works and perpared to spend the afternoon with me.

But when we come into my room!—the stove was burnin'—oh, yes! it hadn't gone out—if it only had!

Two black, cloudy pillars was risin' from them two wicks, and the air was full of a thick, smoochy smoke that went down our throats and settled all over us, and all over everything in the room!

My feller-boarders immejitly excused themselves, sayin' they'd come another day.

Fortinitly the friend that had advised me to make the investment had follered us in, and now I heard a voice through the soot and smoke, sayin':

"Turn down the wicks, you gump!" I managed to turn 'em down somehow, then I rushed out of the house, and went and set down under a pepper-tree and wished I was dead.

My friend jined me pretty soon; *she* wa'n't ruffled the leastest mite, and she says, carm as a clock:

"I guess you turned the wicks up too high; you'll know better next time."

Bein' too beat out and discouraged to speak, I was dum'.

The next day I sent my ile-stove and can back to the store where they come from, hunted up a room that had a chimbley in it, and hired it, and after that I lived in peace and comfort.

Now, Ruth Ann, I don't want you to think I'm one to go to Californy, and then come home and run down her favorite institootions. But the country is young and is goin' to pergress, and when they git round to buildin' more chimbleys to their houses, or to puttin' winders into the ile-

stoves, and patent securities aginst smokin', etc., and when somebody invents proper machinery for runnin' the ile-can, I tell you the average boarder will enjoy life a good deal more than what she does now.

CHAPTER XV.

“CAR’LINE’S HOUSE WARMING.”

Cousin Polly made us a good long visit, and told us so much about Californy, and Californy ways, that I declare, it seemed most as good as goin’, to hear her.

Jest before the time come for her to leave, we had a letter from Car’line, tellin’ us that she was goin’ to have a “house warmin’,” and invitin’ her par and me, and Cousin Polly to come and make her a visit, and so be there at the time.

Car’line said how that in New York they called the kind of party they was goin’ to give a “reception,” but as it was the fust in their new house, and as they liked the old-fashioned ways and names, she and Richard concluded to call it a “house warmin’.”

They invited all Richard’s stylish friends in the city, and most everybody in Punkinville, though there wa’n’t more’n five or ten out o’ the hull lot that went. You see, a good many of ’em didn’t feel as if they could afford it, and some hadn’t never travelled ten mil’ds outside of Punkinville in

their lives, and wouldn't think of venturin' so fur as New York.

Of course Car'line didn't expect they'd all go, but she'd been glad to had 'em every one, and she wanted 'em to know it; that's why she invited 'em. But there was a few individewals that she was bound should go, anyway, so in her letter to her par and me, she mentioned them partick'lar ones, and charged us to see 'em personal, and urge it upon 'em strong.

The names was Aunt Sally Baker (she that give Car'line the two pair o' short-legged woollen stockin's for a weddin' present, you know), and Mis' Plummer (she that give the butter), Deacon and Mis' Deacon Laton, and Aunt Betsey Hawkins that give the rag carpit, and that Car'line named the "Bowdoor" after.

Now I want to tell you before I go any further, that Aunt Betsey Hawkins is jest the nicest old lady that ever lived! She's poor as Job's turkey in creatur' comforts, or would be, if it wa'n't for her friends, but she's rich as Creesus in the love and gratitude of all around her.

She's spent the heft of her life in dewin' deeds of kindness to other folks; she hain't never spared herself, nor her hard-airned money, the leastest mite nor grain; what was her'n was everybody's else to command, alwers.

She hain't a selfish bone in her body. Often and often she'd work all day hard at her loom, weavin' carpits, you know, and then set up all

night with some sick or dyin' person, and she'd give her last slice of bread or drawin' of tea to any poor pedlar or tramp that come along.

And it wa'n't altogether what she done for folks, that made 'em set so by her, it was full as much her sweet and lovin' and motherly ways.

Nobody couldn't never be so bad, but what Aunt Betsey would find good in 'em, and she could gin-erally bring it out, too. Time and agin, her kind advice and helpin' hand has done more to reform the wicked and wayward in Punkinville than all Parson Bassett's prayers and sermons and labor-in's among 'em, and everybody knows it.

So, naterally, every house and home was open and welcome to Aunt Betsey, and Car'line would 'a' been glad to had her come out and live with her for good. But Aunt Betsey run of a notion she'd ruther keep a home of her own. She liked to be independent as well as anybody, for all her gentle ways, and besides, I s'pose she was 'tached to the old place.

The day that Car'line's letter come to us, she sent by express to Aunt Betsey a package, containin' a beautiful black silk dress pattern, with all the furnishin's, a white lace cap, trimmed with lavender colored ribbins, a pair of nice, easy shoes, and a pair of white silk mitts. To crown all, she pinned on to the mitts a bran'-new fifty-dollar bill, to hire the dress made and git any other little things she needed, and pay her expenses out to New York with, she said.

You'd orter seen Aunt Betsey's face when she opened that bundle, and see them things, and read Car'line's note!

This was what Car'line writ:

"DEAR AUNT BETSEY:—Richard and I are goin' to have a house warmin', and would be glad to have all our friends come, but we perpose to *make sure of you*, to begin with, so we send you what we hope will pervent your havin' any excuse for stayin' away.

"Now, don't disappint us, will you? for you know it would spile the hull thing for

"Your lovin' CAR'LINE.

"P. S.—I guess mar and Cousin Polly will go with you to see Miss Gibbs about the dress."

Wall, Polly and I did go with her to have the dress fitted, and we helped Miss Gibbs make it too, bein' she was driv' and didn't see how she could do it jest then—wouldn't, she said, for no livin' woman but Aunt Betsey—and we all three took about as much interest in it as if it had 'a' been our own weddin' gownd.

Aunt Betsey was very tracter'ble, and let us have pretty much our own way with it, only one thing she insisted on to. She said she must have her pocket where it belonged, in the right-hand side seam, so's she could find her hank'chif or knittin' without lookin' all over creation after it, when like as not she was in a sufferin' hurry for it.

Of course it was the nicest dress Aunt Betsey ever had. It must 'a' cost a lot o' money. It was a 'mazin' soft, thick piece o' silk, and it hung jest elegant, and fitted her complete. Miss Gibbs said she never had better luck in her life, and when we put that dress on to Aunt Betsey, she looked as well as anybody—I don't care if it's Queen Victōry herself. One thing was dead sure, she was harnsomer, and had enough sight better figger than Queen Victōry ever had! Aunt Betsey was as straight and ereck as any young girl; she wa'n't a mite too fat nor dumpy, you know, and her face was beautiful. Seemed as if Old Time loved her as well as the rest on us did, and hatin' to mar her dear old face with wrinkles and crows-tracks, had passed her by—proba'ly givin' an extry lot to some other woman instid.

Wall, we went together to New York, me and Hannibal and Aunt Betsey and Cousin Polly. We started about three days before the day set for the party, thinkin' we might, perhaps, be able to help Car'line git ready, knowin' how much cookin' and cleanin' and one thing'n 'nother there ginerally is to be done 'fore sech 'casions. Why, when 'Squire Bates'es folks had their house warmin', I remember me and mother both went over to help, and we and Mis' Bates, all three, cooked and cooked, the hull of two days! Pies and doughnuts and cakes, and all kinds o' meats. Oh, sech an everlastin' lot o' stuff! And there wa'n't none too much, nuther.

But when Polly and me put on our big caliker aprons that mornin' after we got to Car'line's, and went down-stairs to help her, she smiled, and says she,

"Oh, now! How sweet of you to bring your big aprons with the idee of helpin' me. But I shan't need you; there really is very little to do. The rooms are all in order, ready for the flowerist, and as we are goin' to have a caterer——"

Jest then she was called out, and Polly and I stood starin' at one another.

"A house warmin' and nothin' to dew!" says Polly; "wall, I'm beat! Car'line is young yet, Ruth Ann, and I'm 'fraid she lacks calkerlation. I sh'd feel dretful mortified if this 'ere party shouldn't go off well—if the nut-cakes or cookies should give out, you know. How Mis' Gribbin and Serinthy Ann would crow!"

I felt anxious, myself, to tell the truth, but I wouldn't have nobody belittlin' nor suspicionin' Car'line nor Car'line's calkerlation.

"I guess Car'line knows what she's about," says I. "I'll resk her, anyway. But, Polly, what's a caterer?"

"I believe it's a band o' musicianers that sets somewheres out o' sight, and plays to the company while they're eatin'," says Polly. "And music is well enough, but all the music in the world wouldn't *fill 'em up* if the provisions fell short."

I didn't say nothin', but when Car'line come back I took her one side, and says I:

"Car'line, now, if you hain't got everything cooked, and plenty of it, there's nothin' Polly and me'd like better than to go right to work 'long of your cook—you know what kind o' nut cakes and cookies and pound cake your mar can make, don't you, Car'line?" says I, real coaxin'.

"I guess I do!" says Car'line, givin' me a kiss and a hug. "But, as I said, I'm all pervided for; I've got the best '*caterer*' in the city——"

"But, Car'line, child," I interrupts, "*music* ain't everything; they'll want *plenty to eat*. *Vittles* is the main thing, after all," says I.

"Of course," says Car'line; "and Bilks will furnish everything bountiful, and waiters and dishes—oh, it will be all right, you'll see!"

"But," says I, "Polly told me a '*caterer*' was a musicianer, or a set o' musicianers——"

Car'line laughed.

"Oh, dear! She must 'a' been thinkin' of an '*orkestrer*' (orchestra)," says she. "A '*caterer*' is a man that pervides food for entertainments, and takes all the responsibility, you know. 'Most everybody employs 'em here in New York."

"Oh! I wanter know," says I, feelin' ruther sheepish; "but I don't see how you can feel to trust your supper to a *man*! I wouldn't, not to no man livin'!" says I.

But Car'line only laughed and hugged me ag'in, and says she:

“Don’t you worry your dear old head! You’ll find everything will come out right.”

And it did. My stars! if Polly’s eyes and mine didn’t stick out to see them perperations goin’ on! Polly says to me forty times, if she did once:

“*Did you ever! What will Mis’ Gribbin and Serinthy Ann say?*”

I thought the rooms was as pretty as they could possibly be before, but after that flowerist, or *decorator*, as they called him, had got done with ’em you wouldn’t ’a’ knowed ’em! They wa’n’t *rooms* at all, any more, they was *gardens, paradises!*

Every mantletry-shelf was made into a bank o’ flowers, and in every ’vailable space and corner great palm-trees and flowerin’ plants stood, jest as if they growed there, for all the world!

The table had a great bed of roses in the middle on’t, and sech a set of chiny, and sech glass and silver, and even *gold* ware, I never drempt’ of seein!

To each plate was put a little bokay of sweet-smelin’ flowers, and a little book, like—all silver and gilt—that they called a ‘*menew* ;’ that is, a bill of fare or list of the things you can have to eat, in their order. And, though there wa’n’t no nut cakes, nor cookies, nor pound cake, nor much of anything we’d been used to at home, I must say there was what was full as good, if not better, and plenty of it. I couldn’t tell you the names o’ the vittles on that ‘*menew*’ if I tried, for they was mostly in a furrin’

tongue, but they tasted good, and that was the main p'int.

On each of these "*menewses*" there was a different picter. They was all painted by hand, in water colors, under Car'line's direction, and every picter meant somethin' partick'lar to the individewal it was intended for.

On Hannibal's was a mill-wheel and runnin' water, and down in the left hand corner of the page—as true as I live—was a cunnin' little *punkin-sifter*, with the letters H. H., for Hannibal Hawkins, the maker, on it!

You never see a tickleder man than what he was when he fairly took in that picter!

Mine was two female figgers, one younger than t'other. The oldest one was settin' down, and the younger one was leanin' over her, lovin' and 'fectionate. The room they was in looked 'mazin'ly familiar, and—wall, I felt, I knew, that them two figgers was meant for Car'line and me. For a minute I was so choked up I couldn't hardly swaller, and my eyes 'most overflowed with tears. To think that she should so regard me, bless her! And me only her step-mar, after all!

But Aunt Betsey's picter was the most remarkable. It was an ancient-lookin' carpet loom, with great rough beams and bars, and the queer long reed goin' across't it, and, settin' perched up on the high seat before it, was the figger of 'a little woman, weavin'.

The great, gay-colored balls, red, yeller, and

green, was scattered round her on the floor, and a broad, slantin' sunbeam, come in from somewheres, lightin' up everything with a sort of glory, and jest touchin' the little woman's head.

Wa'n't it a happy thought in Car'line, so to honor and dignerfy the humble trade that Aunt Betsey had follered all her life, and so to kinder make her feel that there was poetry and beauty in it?

It was jest like Car'line; nobody else wouldn't ever 'a' thought on't!

On Cousin Polly's "*menew*" was a picter of Car'line herself, jest the head and shoulders. I s'pose she thought Polly would like it to remember her by, when she went back home.

Wall, I can't dwell on to every partick'lar of the party, it would take too long; but it was all beautiful, beautiful and complete!

After supper, there was singin' by two great singers, and then a kind of jugglerin' performance, that did beat all you ever see!

I heard Mister Gribbin tell Richard how it was wuth the fare to New York and back jest to see it!

And now, oh dear me suz! I hate to tell the rest, for I can't, very well, but I must try.

All the company had gone but the Punkinville folks; they was to spend the night, and Richard had planned to take 'em round the city the next day, and show 'em the sights.

We was in the music-and-singin'-room. Richard

had jest gone somewheres to tend to somethin' or 'nother, but the rest on us was there talkin' over the party and the folks that was to it. I'm glad to say that Serinthy Ann Gribbin had the grace and honesty to confess that she never see no sech party before, nor no sech high up, stylish folks, nowheres, *not even in Boston*. She told Car'line so, fair and square, and said "it did beat all!"

But Car'line didn't seem to mind—took it as modest and simple as could be.

It was pretty well 'long towards mornin', and Aunt Betsey said she felt as if she really must go to bed, so Car'line kissed her and says :

"You shall have Great Gran'ma Hawkinses' old silver candlestick to light you to bed, Aunt Betsey!"

It stood on the shelf jest over her head, and as she spoke she reached up to git it for her; but in so dewin' her great, long, flowin' sleeve (they call 'em "angel sleeves," I believe) fell down and ketched the flame of one o' the gas-jets inside a wide, flarin' shade, and in a minute her thin, white dress was one blaze of fire!

Then everybody went wild!

Hannibal grabbed a great pitcher of lemonade and, openin' a winder, he dashed it out, yellin' "Fire! fire!"

Serinthy Ann Gribbin fainted away and fell on to the floor, and I, in makin' a rush acrost the room, stumbled over her. But Aunt Betsey—Aunt

Betsey's head was level—quicker'n a wink she snatched a kiver off'n a little table standin' by and wropped Car'line in it, puttin' her arms round her and holdin' her tight, though she screamed and struggled like a crazy creatur' to get away.

It was all over in no time. The fire was out, and though it seemed like a mericle of marcy, Car'line wa'n't burned hardly a mite!

Her lace dress was gone, every thread on't; bein' so light, it had flashed up quick, but the table kiver had smothered it 'fore it had a chance to go any further. Her underclo'es wa'n't burnt at all.

One of Aunt Betsey's hands was burnt, but not bad, and *her new black silk dress was ruined!*

It must 'a' been done by the flames while she was gittin' the table-kiver 'round Car'line. It hadn't blazed at all; didn't seem to be burnt through, really, but it was all crinkled and cockled up, in the most cur'is way you ever see!

Of course Richard heard the outcry and come rushin' in with all the hired help at his heels. He fell down on his knees beside o' Car'line, and it was some little time 'fore she could make him believe she wa'n't dead, nor even hurt!

And when he got it through his head how she had been saved, and by Aunt Betsey, you'd orter seen him! He took the little old lady in his arms and set down on the sofy, holdin' her as if she'd been a child, and I dunno' hardly what he said; but the amount on't was, that she'd "*saved Car'*"

line ! Car'line ! Car'line ! " and he begged on her to tell him how he could thank her, and bless all her life to pay for't.

Wall, as soon as we could, we took Aunt Betsey up-stairs to her "Bowdoor," and put her to bed, with the risin' sun bed kiver over her, and all the things she so enjoyed to see, around her; and when I had dressed her hand (everybody was so anxious to help, that I thought I shouldn't never git it done!), and when she had swallowed, like a lam', all the doses—the cordials and quietin' powders and things, that each one insisted on to it she must take, then, we all went off to bed leavin' Car'line and Richard alone with her to tell her agin how grateful they was, and how they loved her, and that they was goin' to be her children now, her son and darter, as it were, and take care of her alwers.

And the dear old soul cried a little, and said, "it wa'n't nothin'; somebody else would 'a' done it if she hadn't," and a lot more. But she must 'a' felt real kind o' weak and shook up, for when she see the black silk layin' all in a ruined heap, she broke clear down, and says, real pitiful, to Car'line, "*I am* sorry about the gown; I never had a silk gown before, you know, Car'line."

Then Richard and Car'line set to and tried to make her understand that she should have all the silk gowns she could wear, and some to give away, if she liked. But she couldn't sense it, and shook her head, and looked reprov'in', sayin' "It wouldn't

never dew for young married folks to begin with sech extravergant notions."

Car'line laughed and looked at Richard, then leaned over and whispered somethin' in Aunt Betsey's ear. This is what she said: "*Aunt Betsey, we ain't extravergant, because we're wuth more'n three million dollars, and we don't know what under the sun to do with it.*"

So Aunt Betsey had to be satisfied, and 'twixt laughin' and cryin' promised she'd give up workin' so hard, and let them dew for her.

They staid with her till she fell asleep, and then, with their arms around one 'nother, like two children, they tiptoed out of the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. DEACON PLUMMER'S THANKSGIVING.

Deacon Plummer was too stingy to live, and everybody knew it! But I don't s'pose anybody knew how poor Mis' Plummer had to manage and contrive and skimp to get along.

She never had the handlin' of any money; even the egg and butter money, that most every farmer's wife has for her own use, all went into the deacon's pockits, and if she wanted a new gown or bunnit, or a pair of shoes—I hadn't orter say if she *wanted* 'em, but if she must have 'em, and there wa'n't no possible airthly way for him to skin out o' gittin' 'em—then the deacon would go to the store with her and buy 'em and pay for 'em, jest as if she was a child or an ijiot, and incaperble o' dewin' business on her own hook.

If Mis' Plummer hadn't had the best disposition in the world she wouldn't 'a' stood it all them years; as it was, it wore on her and told on her fearful, and, though the deacon was one of the richest men in Punkinville, she might 'a' been the wife of the poorest and miser'blest, so fur as any outward indications was consarned—or innard in-

dications either—for she was alwers half starved. She wa'n't nothin' but skin and bones, and her countenants was as thin and peaked as could be.

You see, everything that they raised on the farm that ought to have furnished their table bountiful, sech as beef creatur's, pigs, turkeys, hens, eggs, and fruit, and veg'tables, was either sold at the store or sent off on the cars to the city markets, and the money that come from 'em was put in the bank and kep' there.

Pretty much all their livin' the year round was salt pork and pertaters, with now and then a biled dish, or a mess o' baked beans.

And the wust on't was, that as the deacon got older his stinginess grew upon him, and every year he made it harder and harder for Mis' Plummer to git along. She never, *never* had nothin' *ter dew with!* That was her everlastin', continewal complaint. Sometimes she had thought serious of applyin' to the town, to see if that wouldn't shame the deacon into bein' more liberal and decent. She never thought of applyin' for a *divorce and alermony*, as a city woman would 'a' done! Bless you, no! I don't s'pose sech an idee ever entered Mis' Plummer's head! She wa'n't one o' that kind; there wa'n't nothin' strong-minded nor spunky 'bout Mis' Plummer. She was one of these 'ere little, mild, meachin' women that don't darster say their soul's their own, unless everybody's willin', you know.

Wall, as I said, Deacon Plummer grew wuss'n

wuss, and come along the week before 'Thanks-givin' he got a bran'-new crotchet into his head.

It was at family devotions one mornin', jest before the readin', that he divulgated it to his wife.

He finds the place in Nehemiar—he alwers read the long chapters in fall and winter, and kep' the short ones for hurryin' time in hayin'—he finds the place, and puts his thum' in to keep it, then, drawin' on a long face, he looks at Mis' Plummer over his spe'tacles, and says he :

“Wife, I run of a notion that this 'ere Thanks-givin' business is all foolishness! Seem's if it must be a sin in the sight o' the Lord to eat so much one day in the year. I don't believe it's necessary to make pigs and gluttons of ourselves in order to have thankful hearts, 'n if we go to meetin', and so on, why ain't that enough?”

Mis' Plummer didn't say nothin', jest set and looked at him kinder helpless, with her hands in her lap, and he went on.

“I reckon we'll sell the turkey this year and have our usual dinner, 'long's there ain't no children comin' home, nor nothin'.”

Then he begun to read a hull chapter full of long, hard names, and his pronounciation was enough to make a cat laugh, but Mis' Plummer didn't laugh; there wa'n't no laugh in her, no time, and that mornin' she felt oncommon num'.

All through the readin' she set there with her hands in her lap, not exactly thinkin', but kinder

wonderin' and grievin'. And when they kneeled down to pray, she kep' on wonderin' more'n ever. She wondered what she had to be thankful for, anyway. She knew that their daughter Ellen, all the child they had in the world, lived so fur away that she couldn't afford to come home to Thanksgivin' and bring the children—bein' she was a widder and poor—and what did she, her mar, care to eat turkey and plum puddin' all alone with the deacon! It was jest as well to put the money in the bank—but Ellen—the children—oh! how she wanted to see 'em, and how she did feel! But, as I have said, she was one of the meek, all-sufferin' kind, and she jest give right up, and kep' still.

Massy sakes! I'd like to see Hannibal undertake to grind me down like that! I'd make it so hot for him that he'd be glad to have Thanksgivin' every day in the year for the sake o' peace! And I ain't what you'd call a termagant nor a tartar, nuther, but I wouldn't yumor a man in bein' so awful mean, would you? I hold that if a man won't be kinder half decent of his own accord, he must be *made* to be so. Deacon Plummer was *made to be so*; but not by his wife—you'll see how it was brought about.

This new projeck of the deacon's, and the prospect of the lonesome thanksgivin', seemed to break Mis' Plummer all up. There wa'n't nothin' tew her, no time, as you might say, and this was like the last straw on the camel's back. All to once

she give out and lay down on her bed as if she meant to die.

The next mornin', when she didn't get up as usual, the deacon didn't think much about it—s'posed she'd be up bimeby—and so he shuffled round and warmed up some tea, and got a bite o' somethin' to eat, and went out to work. But, when he come in to dinner, there lay his wife jest the same, and she didn't think o' gettin' up.

"Wall, wall!" says the deacon, "I wanter know if you're goin' to be sick. I'm afraid you hain't been careful enough 'bout your diet. What have you e't?"

Upon this, poor Mis' Plummer turned her face to the wall and cried like a baby. She didn't say a word, she jest laid and cried. It wa'n't often she cried, and it scairt the deacon. He didn't know what under the sun to do, but he knew he must do somethin'. Why! seemed as if she wouldn't never stop! How she did cry! He knew he must do somethin', so he het a brick and put to her feet, and was jest makin' a mustard plaster to put on her somewheres, when Mis' Gribbin happened in.

She see how it was with Mis' Plummer in a minute. Mis' Gribbin is awful cute about some things, and she ain't afraid o' no man livin', and she says to herself:

"Now is the time to strike for liberty for Mis' Plummer."

"Deacon Plummer," says she, matter o' fact as

you please, "your wife's a sick woman, and she's goin' to die right off, 'less you hyper round and do somethin', and do it quick! But fust, you'd better let me step over and fetch the doctor."

The deacon was wonderful took down. All of a sudden he felt that his wife was invalooable to him; he couldn't get along without her, nohow. He was as anxious to have the doctor as Mis' Gribbin was, and told her to hurry over and get him.

So she went—he lived near by—and she says to him:

"Doctor Bonder, now is your chance to do a deed o' humanity, and put a spoke in Dea. Plummer's wheel for all time! If he's got any heart and feelin's, you must work on to 'em for his wife's sake. It would be cruel to bring her back to life, 'less you can do somethin' to make that life endoorable. Don't, I beg on ye, raise her up to live on in the same old skimpy, miser'ble way. Better let her die, and done with it."

They discussed and considered over the matter for a few minutes, then went together to the deacon's house.

They found Mis' Plummer layin' jest the same. The deacon's hot bricks and mustard plasters hadn't 'livened her up a mite, appearently.

Wall, the doctor examined her and diaggernosed her case as well as he could; then he motioned the deacon out into the other room and shet the door behind him.

They talked there for a good half-hour, and when the deacon come out, he looked for all the world as if he'd been drawed through a 'not-hole. He looked like a man who had renounced "the world, the flesh, and the devil," and all his stinginess to once; and Mis' Gribbin, when she see him, laughed in her sleeve and says to herself:

"I guess Doctor Bonder has made a good thur-rer job on't this time!"

Afterwards the Doctor give her a full account of that 'ere interview; and it was interestin', and as it turned out highly satisfactory to all consarned.

It seems the doctor took him awful sollum to begin with, and says he:

"Deacon, do you set high vally on your wife's life?"

"High vally on my wife's life!" says the deacon, red in the face; "of course I dew. What you talkin' about?"

"She has been a devoted and lovin' pardner," goes on the doctor, "she has been kind and equinomical, nussed you in sickness, and shared your labors in health, hain't she?"

"Yes, yes! of course. What in natur' be you drivin' at?" says the deacon, gittin' excited.

The doctor only waived his hand to enjine silence, and went on kinder dreamy, as if talkin' to himself.

"I remember how harnsome she was when you fetched her home a bride. Plump as a partridge, rosy as a flower, and as laughin' and chipper a

girl as I 'bout ever see. Changed, hain't she?" turnin' to the deacon, and feelin' in his pocket for his hank'chif to wipe away his tears. "It does beat all, how she's changed," says he.

"Changed!" says the deacon, squirmin' round in his chair and all of a fluster, "of course she's changed. Why, we've been married goin' on twenty-five year! You can't expect a woman to stay twenty all her life."

"That's so," 'lowed the doctor, 'pearin' to reflect. "But she's alwers been pretty well, hain't she? Been able to work most o' the time!"

"Never's sick a day in her life before, except when Ellen was born," answers the deacon, proudly.

"H'm! has an excellent constitootion, no doubt," says the doctor, noddin' his head approvin'. Then he didn't speak agin for some time, seemed to be thinkin'.

"I know farmer's wives grow old pretty fast as a gineral thing; break down young, don't they? But, Deacon Plummer," squarin' round on him and lookin' him in the eye, "Deacon Plummer, I want to ask you to compare your wife's looks with the looks of other women of her age in town, no harnsomer, no healthier than what she was when she was married, and tell me if you think there's a difference."

Then he mentioned a dozen or so, jest as it happened, most of 'em slick, comfortable, happy-lookin' women, and says he:

“Now they’re different from Mis’ Plummer, and why? I ask you fair and candid, why shouldn’t your wife look as happy, as slick and plump as they dew, and why shouldn’t she be as well dressed and make as good a ’pearance every way? And why is it that she has took to her bed in the prime o’ life, as you might say, and don’t want to live no longer? for I find that’s about the way it is with her.”

He stopped, and the deacon set there pale as a statu’. He didn’t answer back a word, jest set with his head dropped down on his chist, as if he was stunned or somethin’, and the doctor went out and left him alone.

When Dr. Bonder come back to Mis’ Plummer he perscribed for her—not much medicine, but plenty of good nussin’ and good feedin’—wine and beef-tea, and chicken and lamb broth to begin with, and he left it to Mis’ Gribbin to see that she had ’em; then he leans over Mis’ Plummer and says, real cheerful,

“Now you must brace right up, Mis’ Plummer, and try to git well. The deacon can’t git along without you, and I guess he’ll make things as easy and pleasant as he can for you, if you’ll only git well.”

She hadn’t no idee of what he really meant; she only smiled kinder sad, but her great eyes spoke volyumes. *She didn’t mean to live—not yet.*

As I said, it was as much as half an hour after

the doctor left that the deacon come back into the bedroom. He went up to the bed and set down beside his wife and looked at her. She was asleep, and he must have realized how pitiful she looked, for Mis' Gribbin see him draw his hand acrost his eyes once or twice on the sly. After he'd set a spell he went out to Mis' Gribbin (she was jest buildin' a fire in the kitchen stove), and says he :

"What was the doctor's orders? What can I dew to help ye?"

"He ordered nourishin' food and wine, and so on," she says; "and I guess the fust thing, you may kill a chicken, if you're min' ter, and git it ready for the broth, and then go over to Jake Goodale's and buy a quart or so of that oldest grape wine o' his'n. She'll be awake by the time you git back with it."

The deacon didn't so much as wink at the chicken, but when she spoke of the wine so off hand and matter o' course, he drewed in his breath once or twice, kinder spasmodicky, but never opened his head.

He killed the chicken and got it ready for the pot, as spry and handy as a woman, and then took a gallon jug and started off to Jake Goodale's after the wine.

When the broth was ready, the deacon asked if he might take it in, so Mis' Gribbin filled one of the chiny bowls that was Mis' Plummer's mar's, and set it in a plate with a cracker or two, and he took 'em along.

When Mis' Plummer tasted of the broth she looked at her husband kinder scairt, and says she,

"Where did this 'ere come from?"

And the deacon laughed and says:

"It's made out o' one of our best Plymouth Rocks; is it good?"

A wonderin', quiverin' smile hovered for a minute on to her poor face; she didn't know what to make on't; but when he lugged the jug o' wine into the room and poured out half a tumblerful and handed it to her, her eyes fairly stuck out of her head with astonishment.

"Drink it," says the deacon, "it'll do you good. It's Jake Goodale's oldest grape wine that you've heard tell on."

"Why, why! husband!" she whispered, tremblin'; "didn't it cost an awful sight o' money?"

"Only three dollars a gallon," he answers, tryin' to smile, and succeedin' middlin' well.

She sipped it slow, eyin' him over the top o' the tumbler while she done so. When she set it down, she spoke ag'in awful meachin' and 'pealin', her lip tremblin' as if she was goin' to cry.

"I'm sorry to put you to so much expense, husband—I'm 'fraid—I'm 'fraid it ain't wuth while!"

The deacon got up and blowed his nose with all his might and main.

"I want you to git well, Sarah, I want you to git well!" he managed to say.

The strangest expression come into her face you ever see in any creatur's. Seemed as if she thought at fust :

"Yes! you want me to git well, so I can work and slave and save for you ag'in," and I s'pose she felt as if she didn't want'er do it; then, as if struck by somethin' in his looks, she seemed to git a dim idee that somethin' had happened to him, that he was different, and she tried to make out how it was, but she couldn't, and bein' too tired and weak to think much, she jest shet her eyes and give it all up.

That night the deacon harnessed the old mare and went over after Seliny Truell to come to stay with 'em a spell. Seliny is an excellent hand in case o' sickness, and, bein' an old maid, she's al-wers ready to go and dew for the neighbors.

She's a prime nuss and housekeeper, and she's good comp'ny, too—jest the kind of a person to cheer Mis' Plummer up, you know.

After the deacon got fairly started on the right track, it seemed to be easy enough for him to keep a-goin'. When he begun to spend his money he seemed to enjoy it as much as anybody. The fact was, he set the world by his wife, only he never realized it till he thought of losin' her and the doctor's rakin' down brought him to his senses and made him all over new, as it were. He see that if he wanted to git her up ag'in he must make her happy, and offer her indoolements to live. So he set about it in arnest.

Seliny said she never see a changeder man than what he was, all through.

There was jest about a week to Thanksgivin', and he and Seliny set to work to make that Thanksgivin' a day that Mīs' Plummer 'd remember as long as she lived.

Fust, they bought a nice easy-chair and a lounge for the settin'-room, so that when Mis' Plummer begun to set up (as she did in a day or two) she might be comfortable. Then they had Miss Bab-bitt, the dressmaker, come over and fit her a pretty flannel wrapper, and help Seliny make it. When it was finished they put some lace in the neck and sleeves, and it was lady-like and nice enough for anybody. The fust time the deacon see her in it he actewally blushed and looked as bashful and awk'ard as if he'd come a'courtin'. As for Mis' Plummer, from the minute she begun to hope, she begun to git well, and she was growin' young and pretty every day.

Wall, it come along the day before Thanks-givin', and Mis' Plummer lay back in her easy-chair in the cheerful settin'-room. A pitcher of late fall flowers stood on the mantletry shelf. A cracklin' fire was burnin' in the open fireplace, and the old tabby-cat lay before it on the rug, purrin' for all she was wuth—a perfect picter of content.

The door was open into the kitchen, and she could see Seliny steppin' round about her work,

gittin' ready for to-morrer. She could smell the stuffin' for the turkey, and the plum-puddin' bakin' in the oven. She knew there was a hull shelf full o' pies in the pantry—she see 'em yesterday; six mince, six punkin, three apple, and three cram-berry tart. She thought it was ruther too many to make at once, jest for three folks—it seemed so strange—why! she never used to have pies—not even one—'less the minister or comp'ny was comin'. But everything was strange now-days!

She looked down at her pretty gown, and round the pleasant room, and listened to Seliny hum-min' a hym'-tune as she worked, and she couldn't hardly believe she was herself at all, or that this was really her home! “How nice everything was, and how happy she'd orter be!”

Then she sighed, and dropped her hands in her lap, with somethin' of the old look in her face—she was thinkin' of Ellen and the children.

How could she bear to be happy—how could she feast on turkey and plum-puddin' to-morrer, and know that Ellen and the children hadn't nothin' of the kind! Oh! she wished that she had asked the deacon to sell the turkey jest the same, and send the money to fetch 'em home! He was so good to her now'days, he wouldn't 'a' refused her—and no dinner at all, with Ellen, would be fur better than turkey without her!

She set there blamin' herself, and thinkin' what

a poor, weak kind of a mother she was, till she felt almost a good min' ter cry, when all to once she heard a noise outside.

The stage had stopped, and there was the sound of voices talkin' and laughin', and of feet hurryin' up the steps. Then the door opened—no, it was burst open—and in trooped a parcel o' children, and behind 'em, with her hands stretched out and the happy tears streamin' down her pretty face, come her daughter Ellen!

How them two kissed and clung to one 'other, till the children got out o' patience, and wouldn't wait no longer for their turn! And how they pounced upon their little gran'mar that they loved more by hearsay than by actewal knowin', and hugged her like bears, so that she almost fainted away in their strong young arms!

Then the deacon comes to the resky, and says, betwixt laughin' and cryin',

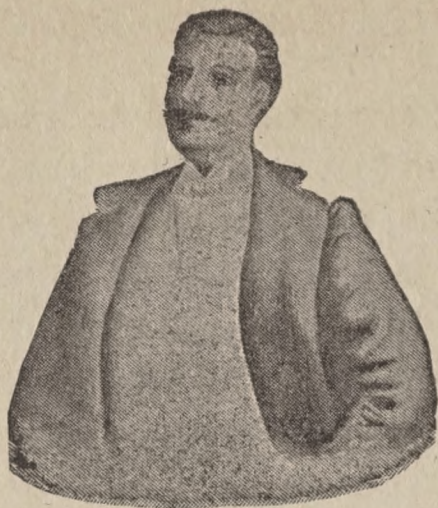
"There, there, children! I guess that'll dew! It's my turn now," and he takes her to the lounge, where she can lay and rest, and still talk with 'em all.

When she is fixed comfortable, he starts to leave her, for he feels that he can't stan' it much longer, but she puts her arm round his neck and pulls him down to her and kisses him, and whispers:

"Oh, husband, husband, how good you be! You've made me the happiest woman in the world!"

The deacon gets away as quick as he can and goes out to the barn and sets down on the hay-cutter and laughs, and wipes his eyes, and blows his nose, till he is some calmer. Then he falls on his knees, and thanks the Lord for showin' him what true happiness is, and how to get it for himself by bestowin' it on others.





CHAPTER XVII.

CAR'LINE'S CHRISTMAS.

It was December, about a fortnight before Christmas, that Car'line and her husband was settin' in their parlor together beside a cracklin' fire.

The room was an awful harnsome one, full of picters and statooary, and bricky bracks, and every-thing you could think on in the way of ornymment. Car'line set in a great white velvet chair, and she had on a pink dress, and looked as sweet and fresh as any flower you ever see. Some sech idee seemed to come into her husband's head when he looked up from his newspaper and his eye lit on her.

But Car'line didn't mind his admirin' gaze; her'n was fixed dreamy-like on the fire, and her face wore that serious, pityin' expression it always had when she was feelin' sorry for somebody, and her husband had learned to read it well.

"What is it, dear?" he asked, leanin' for'ard in

order to smile down into her eyes, and takin' her little hand in his'n.

Car'line roused up and smiled back at him bright as a button.

"Richard," says she, "what are you goin' to give me this year for a Christmas present?" Then she laughed and blushed a little. "I didn't mean to ask that exactly, either," she says, "but about how much money do you s'pose you will put into a present for me? Would you be willin' to tell me?"

Richard never took no 'fence at Car'line's questions; he always knew that she meant well and had an object, and he ginerally laid out to answer 'em to the best of his abilerty, honest and re-speckful; so now he considers for a minute, turnin' the rings round and round on Car'line's fingers kinder absent, and says he, "Wall, I guess about a thousand dollars this time, 'less there's somethin' partick'lar you want that I don't know of."

"There is somethin' partick'lar I want," says Car'line, "not for a present for myself, but it will make me happy," and she turned to Richard with that beseechin' look in her beautiful eyes that was so fetchin'. "Richard, dear," she goes on, "will you—will you give me the money that you would spend on a Christmas present for me, to do jest what I please with; will you?"

"Why! you can have all the money you want to spend, and the present besides," says Richard;

"you can have double your reg'lar allowance, or more."

"Yes, I know," interrupted Car'line, almost bitter, "I know *I* can have everything, everything! And so many folks can't have anything hardly! The thought of them makes me miserable!"

She looked at him with the tears jest ready to fall, her lips a-quiverin'. "But this year, Richard, I want somebody to have *instid o' me*. Let me do for somebody with the money you'd spend for me; give me the happiness of goin' without for their sakes! I shall like that better than anything you can buy me—yes, with a million dollars!"

"Why, Car'line!" says Richard, takin' her in his arms, for he couldn't bear to see her so terribly in 'arnest, "of course, you can do anything you want, anything! I sha'n't hender you. Don't I know it'll be right, whatever 'tis? Ain't you my good angel, my——"

Nobody knows what names he would 'a' called her, nor how many of 'em, but she clapped her hands over his mouth and says,

"There, there! that'll do! Now let's attend to business, if you please." Then she went on to tell him what she had in mind as nigh as she could—of course her plans wasn't all laid out yet—and he agreed to everything, sayin' agin that whatever she done was alwers right, and so forth, and so on.

Now, Car'line had a little sewin' woman that

come to the house every week to look over the clo'es and do the mendin'; her name was Almiry Plum, and she was a terrible scairt, poverty-struck lookin' little thing, but she was a real likely girl, and smart as a trap. She wasn't bad-lookin' nuther. Car'line often wondered whuther no she wouldn't be pretty, take her and dress her up, and give her a free and happy expression o' countenants sech as a young thing like her orte have.

Car'line had been so kind to her that she had won her confidents, and Almiry had told her a great deal about herself and her troubles.

It seemed that she was keepin' company with Kiar Martin, a young man that driv' out for a great market, and brought the meat and vegetables to Car'line's house every day. They 'peared to be dretful fond o' one 'nother—it did beat all! Why, if Almiry happened to be around when Kiar come into the kitchen, he'd git so red in the face, and so flustered and mixed up in his idees, that he couldn't tell a turnup from a pertater; and Almiry, she'd brighten up and hum Moody and Sanky tunes all the rest o' the day, jest for the sight on him.

Car'line knew that Kiar was buildin' a house, a master little house it was, with only four or five rooms to it, but when it was done, he and Almiry was goin' to be married and move into it.

Now, Car'line had noticed lately that every time that little house was mentioned the tears would

come into Almiry's eyes, and she'd hang her head and sigh dismal.

Car'line wondered why, and little by little she got the hull story out of Almiry.



It seemed that Kiar had already been goin' on five years buildin' the little house.

When he begun he had jest about money enough to do it with. He started it early in the summer and laid out to have it finished, so they could be married and move in on Christmas-day.

That was five years ago. And Almiry was calkerlatin' to furnish it inside with what she'd saved of her airnin's. She told Car'line how that she'd had as much as a hundred dollars in the bank to once, but she couldn't keep it there, it alwers had to go jest as Kiar's money did, and the little house wouldn't never be finished and furnished, she felt afraid.

The trouble was, Kiar had a mother to support, and she was old and rheumatically, and was alwers havin' terrible "spells." I don't s'pose she could help it, but, jest as sure as Kiar begun to work on the little house she'd come down with the rheumatiz the wust way, and all the money he'd got ahead would have to be spent for medicine and doctor's bills.

Car'line was in the habit of goin' to Kiar's house once in a while to look after the old lady a little, and carry flannel and liniment and things to make her comfortable, but she hadn't known their partick'lar trouble about the little house 'till a few days before the openin' of this 'ere story. When she did know, she made up her mind that the happiness of them two young lives shouldn't be pos'poned no longer for the lack of a few hundred dollars—and she a millionaire's wife.

It happened that the old mother was took extry bad about this time, and all Kiar's evenin's and every spare minute had to be spent in waitin' on her and dewin' the work, so he didn't hardly

think of the little house at all, much less go nigh it.

Almiry, she come over as often as she could and cooked for 'em or cleaned up, though with her reg'lar day's work she hadn't orter and was gittin' all wore out. Kiar see that she was, but he couldn't help it; he'd look into her little, pale face and wonder if he should ever be able to do anything to make her life easier and happier. The old mother see how it was too and she would groan and take on, and say, "What a burden she was, and why didn't the Lord take her out o' the way, and done with it? *She* didn't want to live no longer, it wa'n't *her* dewin's," and so on. Then them two lovers would comfort the poor old creatur' and tell her they loved her dearly, and didn't want her to die, whatever happened. And afterwards they'd kiss one 'nother good-night, and Almiry would go home and wet her pillar with tears. Oh, it was pitiful in them days! Everything was so hard and tryin'!

Wall, things was goin' on this way when Christmas mornin' come. It was a beautiful sunshiny mornin', and Car'line felt so happy that she couldn't hardly contain herself for thinkin' of all she was goin' to bestow on them poor lovin' hearts.

Right after breakfast she ordered her carriage and drove over to Kiar's house to make a Christmas mornin' call. As good luck would have it, Almiry was there. She had come to help Kiar

as usual, and she had brought him and the old mother her little Christmas presents; a pretty handkerchief for her and a blue silk necktie for him. Kiar's present to Almiry was a bosom pin with a sparklin' white stone in it which Kiar said he "wished was a di'mond, and it wouldn't be half good enough for her if it was a di'mond." One thing was sure, Almiry couldn't 'a' looked more pleased if it had been a di'mond.

After Car'line had give 'em each a triflin' present, jest to make things look right, you know, she told Almiry and Kiar that she had "got to go and buy furnishin's for a house belongin' to a friend of her'n, and that she wished they'd come along and 'sist her, it was sech a job. Would they?"

Car'line had done them so many favors that they were naterally willin' to 'commode her, and besides they didn't git a chance to ride in a carriage every day. They said they would go and be glad to, so they got one of the neighbors to come in and set with the mother while they was gone, and the three started off together.

Car'line drove to the nearest store where they kep' house furnishin's, and beginnin' with the kitchenary department, she asked Almiry and Kiar if they "wouldn't please pick out what they thought orter go in a modest little kitchen, jest comfortable, you know," says she, "for folks in about your circumstances o' life. Whatever suits you will suit her," says Car'line.

Here Kiar squeezed Almiry's hand on the sly,

and Car'line heard him whisper, "Oh, if the little house was only done and we was buyin' our things instid of somebody's elses!" And Almiry answered back patient and lovin', "Never mind, Kiar, let's play they be for us anyway, and we shall enjoy buyin' most as much." And they did—the onselfish creatur's. They picked out a stove and pots and kittles to go with it, and tins and washtubs and flat-irons; they even was so reckless and extravagant as to buy a patent coffee pot and copper wash-dish.

"Of course *we* shouldn't think o' havin' no sech things, but for *her* I guess they'll be the best and equinomicle enough in the long run," Almiry said.

Then they picked out a handsome set o' dishes, that Almiry hung over and handled as if she couldn't never tear herself away (it beats all how women do like pretty crockery ware!); and Kiar looked at her and imagined what it would be to see her with a white apron on using them dishes and all them nice new things in their own kitchen in the little house, and at the thought of it he hove a deep sigh, and wiped his eyes fust on one paper cuff, then on t'other.

After they'd fitted out the kitchen even to the broom and pepper-box, they went on to the bedroom and bought a neat little set comprisin' a bur'o with a lookin'-glass on top, a rockin'-chair, and et settery, et settery, and a great rug to lay down before the bed.

Last of all they come to the parlor, and at this juncter, Car'line's strength give out onaccountably, so she had to leave the rest of the job to them.

Then, oh! how they almost trembled at fust at the idee of takin' sech a responsibility, but finally riz to the 'casion, determined to do their level best. And they done it, and I guess no parlor was ever furnished more thurrer and tasty for the money than what that one was.

Wall, when all was done, they felt terrible worried and anxious for fear it wouldn't suit, but Car'line told 'em "there wouldn't be the leastest mite o' trouble about that, she'd warrant," so they tried to feel easy on that pint.

Take it all 'round, it was a long job and they didn't git through till dinner-time. But how they had enjoyed themselves! "Most as much," they told Car'line, "as if it had been their own little house they was fittin' out."

"Perhaps," said Kiar, lookin' at Almiry and tryin' to smile, "perhaps by next Christmas we'll be buyin' for ourselves." But Almiry sighed, though she smiled back; and Car'line knew she was thinkin' it wa'n't any ways likely.

Car'line writ on a slip of paper, tellin' where to send the goods, and give it to the store-keeper, chargin' him to have 'em delivered as soon as possible. Then she turned to Kiar and Almiry, sayin' she orter be ashamed of herself for askin' anything more, but she hadn't got quite done with

them yet. "Would they go again along with her to one more place in the afternoon? She would be so much obleeged, and she wouldn't keep 'em but jest a little while."

They said they would go and welcome, and Car'line, after thankin' them a thousand times for their services, carried them home and left them.

Perhaps we orter told you before, though you may have guessed it yourselves, that Car'line had put the carpenters and other workmen on to the little house them two weeks before Christmas, and by hurryin' up a little they had finished it complete, even to the door stun and scraper. It was clean, too, inside and out, and ready to live in.

As soon as the furnitoor they had bought arrove, she went and got Kiar and Almiry once more and took 'em along to participate in the "*de new mong*," which is French and means the windin' up, the climax of a story or play, you know.

When they stopped in front of the little house and see it all finished, neat as a new pin, and harnsome as a picter', you must imagine their feelin's! I guess Kiar felt some as 'Laddin did when he rubbed the lamp and the palace 'peared before him so onexpected. And as for Almiry, poor little thing, she jest fell into Kiar's arms and cried as if her heart was broke, instid of bein' a'most burstin' with happiness!

Car'line told 'em it was done—a good fairy had finished it—a-purpose for them, it was their'n, the house and everything in it, and they could git

married and go to housekeepin' as quick as they was a min' ter.

Then she led 'em inside, and they looked round, too dazed at fust to take it in, but finally they come tew as it were, and oh! how happy they was! How they laughed, rememberin' their anxiety for fear the folks they were selectin' for wouldn't be suited! How they blushed to think they had picked out the patent coffee-pot and the copper wash-dish for themselves after all!

Was there ever anybody so happy as them two young folks? No! nobody, I do believe, except-in' Car'line herself, the good fairy who had the right to be so, sence it is more blessed to give than to receive, you know.

And as she sat that night in her great, white velvet chair before the cracklin' fire, tellin' her husband all about it, she felt that this had been the very happiest day of all her happy life.

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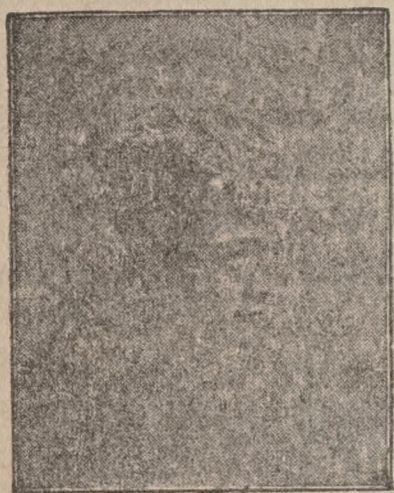
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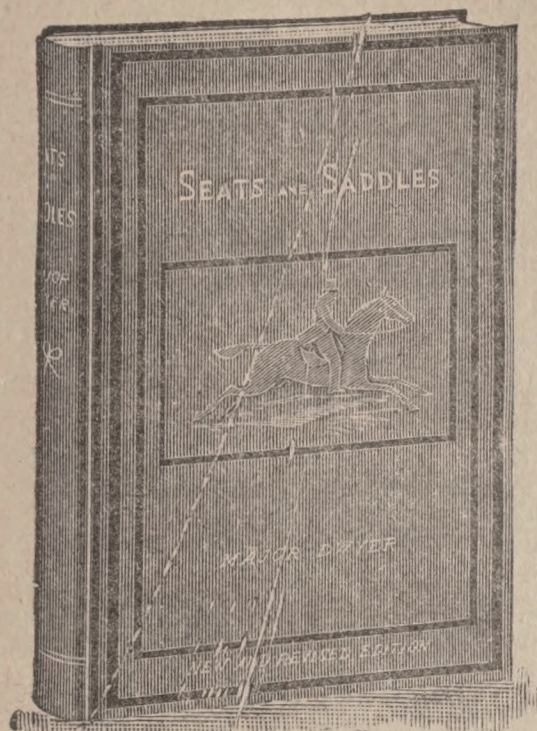
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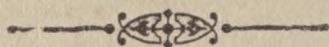
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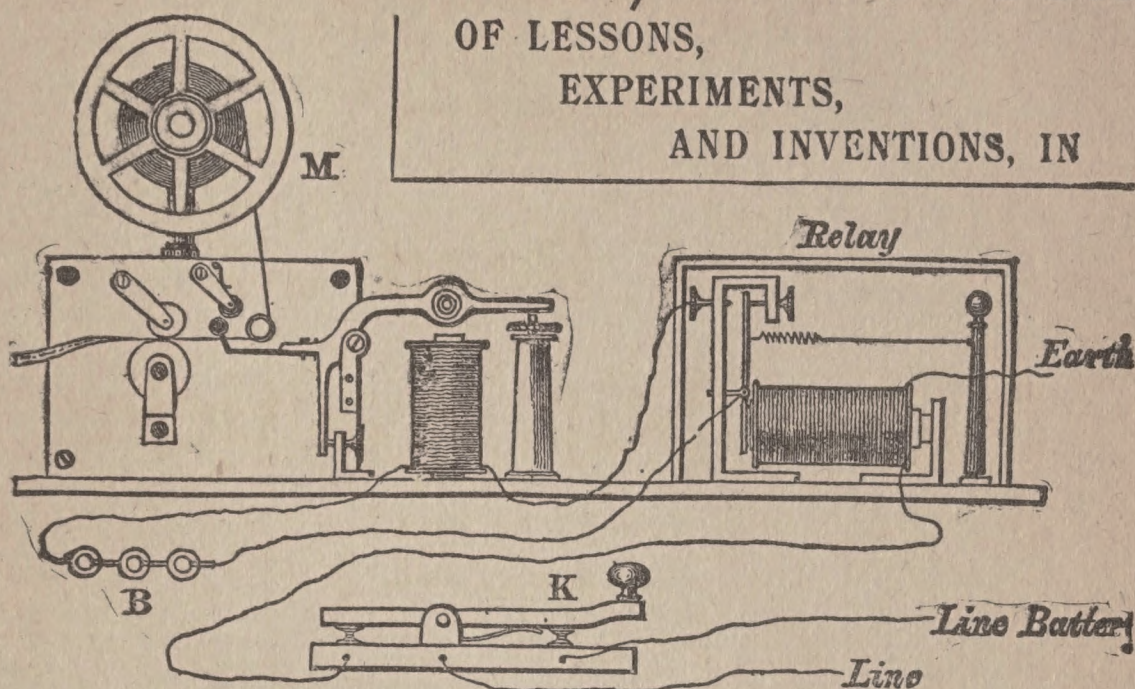
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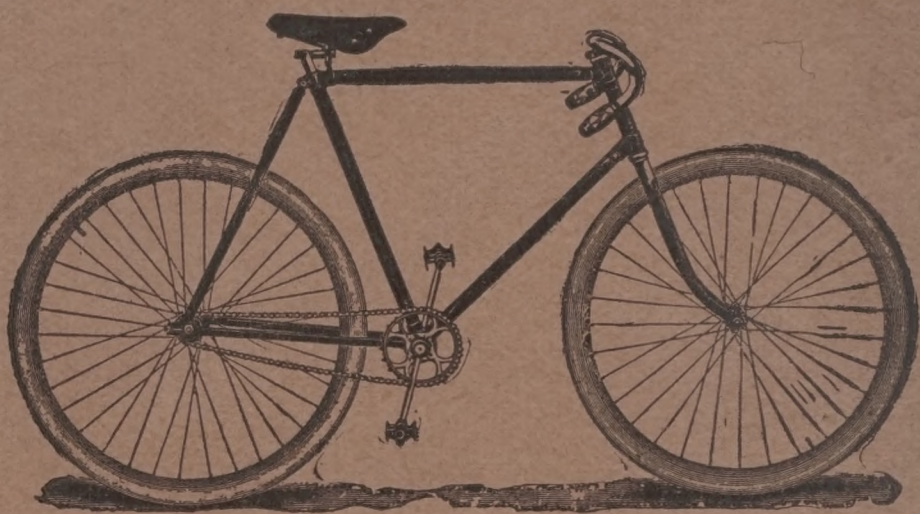
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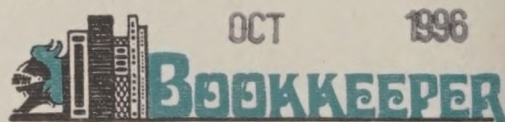
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